METALSMITH

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number 3

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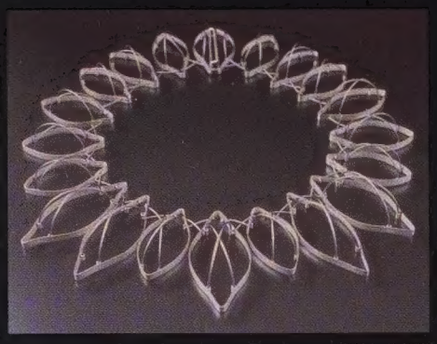

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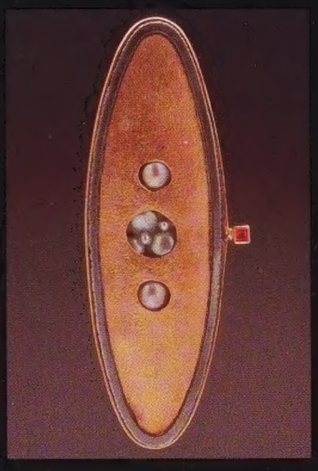

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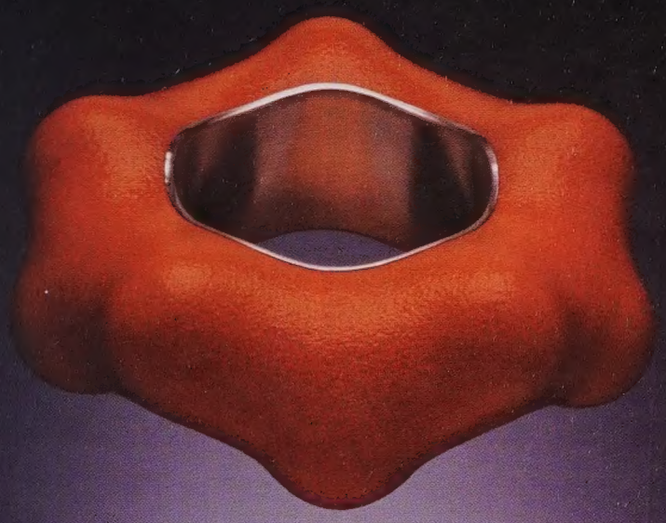

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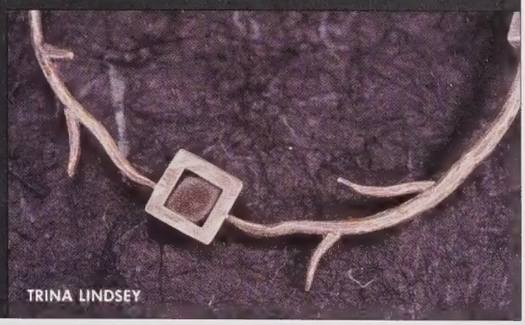

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Untitled, 1992
electroformed copper foil, enameled
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Photograph by Lee Fatherree

top left
Tom Joyce
Pyrophyte (detail)
fully ignited newspaper, cast iron, cable
48 x 32 x 32"
Photograph by Nick Merrick

below left
Edgar Brandt
Potiche (detail), 1925
silvered bronze
$48^{1}/2$"
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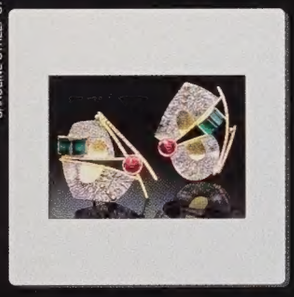

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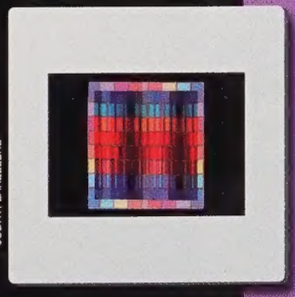

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FROM THE EDITOR

FRANK LEWIS ONE OF THE WAYS THAT MY WIFE AND I RELAX IS TO TAKE AN AFTERNOON AND JUST START DRIVING. Along the way we look for junk stores, garage sales, goodwill shops, antique malls, and the occasional high-end antique gallery. We stop, no matter how dismal or tony the façade may be and look for curiosities, treasures, and the one deal that may put us on the "Antiques Road Show." Even after a full afternoon or the rare weekend-long journey in which we return completely empty-handed, the trips are fun. One of the things that I most enjoy is thinking about how a particular object, be it junk or precious artifact, has moved through time and culture and then it finds itself, again, on a shelf, on sale for a pittance or a king's ransom.

All of these things, to varying degrees, have been invested with a value that often has little to do with their actual material worth. One ugly ceramic dog, marked with its original Kresge's price sticker "$1.25," was in a collectible case with an $85 tag. (My wife informed me that according to what similar objects were selling for online, $85 was a real bargain.) A large silver Track and Field cup, tarnished and engraved with the name of a high school in Indiana, was marked $2, much less than the material was worth, I am sure.

I find myself particularly drawn to the jewelry. Though it is disturbing to sift through the bowls of costume pins, necklaces, and earrings, as if somehow I am invading my foreboding Aunt Francis's dressing table, I am still hoping to find an unrecognized Lalique or Margaret de Patta. I am fascinated by the Jet and hair mourning jewelry, rosaries, and turn of the century Sunday School attendance pins. Occasionally the odd student metals project turns up, most are uninspired but sometimes something so well done or so weird surfaces that it is worth a purchase.

What am I actually looking for in those musty shoeboxes and Rubbermaid bins? Apart from that discovery that will allow me to take early retirement, I think that I am looking for people. Sometimes the artist or hobby crafter will seem to be lurking therein, not just in the scratched initials on the pinback, but in the interesting combination of materials, or the sensitive handling of forms. At other times I am probably hoping to discover the person commemorated through woven hair and the manufactured signs of public grieving. Who knows, maybe my predilection for religious jewelry is a search for faith and belief. What I always find however, is something of myself.

I often wonder if that is what every patron seeks when they buy more expensive jewelry. As I walk through the Baltimore Craft Show, watch a gallery assistant convince a young well-to-do couple that a Valerie Mitchell brooch warrants consideration, talk to a collector who proudly displays a Mary Lee Hu necklace, the jewelry is almost always a mirror. It reflects the buyers image. And unlike other works of art and craft, the work of jewelry can be worn, held, pocketed, hidden away, lent, and even given in a private and intimate moment.

Many works of art and fine craft end up in cases, fixed to museum walls, or as trophies of upward mobility in a "carefully designed living environment." With those positionings come a status that some of the readers of this magazine desire for metalwork. Lately, however, I have come to ask myself if this status may not come for jewelry and metalwork at too great a cost. M

FCL

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BOOK REVIEW

OBJECT AND ORNAMENT:

Canadian Jewellery and Metal Art 1946-1996

by Anne Barros
(Boston Mills Press, 1997)

143 pp., 51 colour plates, 103 b/w plates
Clothbound, $28

reviewed by BARBARA ISHERWOOD

This is a landmark publication for Canadian metalsmithing. Chronicling makers of jewellery and hollowware from the 1940s to the present, it is the first major overview of metalsmithing in Canada. Through succinct text and numerous well reproduced photographic plates, author and metalsmith Anne Barros places the work of almost 300 artists into historical context. Activities within the metals community, such as the formation of guilds, the influence of European-trained jewellers, and the growth of schools, exhibitions, and galleries are examined alongside the broader artistic movements and social factors that have shaped the work of Canadian metalsmiths throughout the decades.

All of this is illustrated through the work of both well-known makers and those deserving of more recognition. Of particular significance is the attention paid to the early years of Canadian metalsmithing, which have suffered from inadequate documentation and the general neglect of craft history. The careers of influential makers such as silversmith Rudy Renzius and jeweller Nancy Meek Pocock warrant further investigation, and Barros's book provides both the stimulus and tools, in the form of a bibliography and a compendium of artists.

The book also provides an opportunity to assess Canadian artists' responses to trends in metalsmithing over the past fifty years. As Barros points out, the Canadian tendency towards moderation surfaces in our artistic production. Consequently, with a few exceptions, highly conceptual work has not taken a strong foothold here. Conversely, the demands of the conservative Canadian marketplace have resulted in some work in which decoration overwhelms idea.

However, as *Object and Ornament* demonstrates, between these two extremes lies a large body of work that is united by excellence in design, innovation in conception, and the highest standards of craftsmanship. Sandra Noble Goss's streamlined sterling silver and acrylic necklace looks as fresh and appealing as when it was made in 1977. A full page colour reproduction of Lois Etherington Betteridge's hollowware *Ice-Cream Cone* elicits renewed appreciation for the consummate skills of this Order of Canada recipient, while Kye-yeon Son's intriguing copper bowl, pierced by curved and undulating rods, evokes curiosity about the rest of this artist's production.

Apart from its usefulness for historians and collectors, this book also serves the valuable function of fostering an enhanced sense of community among Canada's metalsmiths, who share the challenges presented by this country's vast landscape and undeveloped marketplace. For this relatively small but talented group, *Object and Ornament* will no doubt provide a well-deserved boost of confidence. M

Barbara Isherwood is a writer and frequent contributor to *Metalsmith*. She currently resides in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

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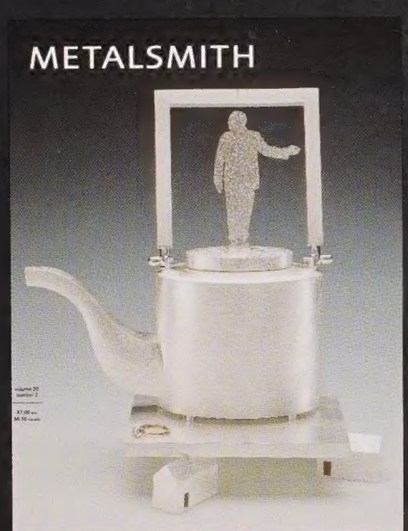

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LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR

November 1, 1998

Dear Editor:

Jamie Bennett's comments in *Metalsmith* Volume 18, #5 under "Recent Slightings" bring to my attention his interest as well as Bruce Metcalf's in quality writing in the area of Art Criticism. I know both have tried to promote more meaningful attention and dialogue to this subject with hopes that it will stimulate more discussion in print and a growing awareness of what is good happening in the Arts and what it is lacking. I have known both Metcalf's and Bennett's work and words for a good number of years and know them to be very talented in works and words in print. I somehow also know that when people begin to enter into Art Criticism it tends to turn some off or most likely gets their emotions stirred up. This I often witnessed in crits I attended and participated in when a teacher in college. The end result quite often was not informative or constructive. It tended to turn students off from creating anything for weeks on end. Quite often students would come into my office and tell me days or weeks after a crit that they were unable to get started again and felt defeated by what was said about their work. I began trying to pay closer attention to just what was said in crits to see if comments made were less than constructive or had no value. I found that things said were generally interesting and often right on the mark. They were intelligent and should have helped the students improve what they were doing. Why then did they come to me so often feeling so destroyed by these crits? I discovered, over a period of years and after considerable therapy, that the way we talk to each other does much to posture how we take in other people's constructive criticism. For example: If I said to a student: "You should. . . ." at the beginning of what I was about to say about his or her work, I was in his or her mind taking on a role as a parent. That was all it would take to turn them off to hearing anything good or constructive I might say about their work PERIOD!

However, instead I could begin my comments about any student's work first with the statement: "Anything I'm about to say to you about your work is about ME and not about you or whether I'm right about what I feel works or doesn't work about your work; and if anything I happen to say about your work you find of some use to you and can be of help, that would be a bonus and would feel good for me and maybe helpful to you." I always began after that opening statement NOT by saying: "You should . . ." but "I would prefer. . ." or "I feel I'd like to see . . . ." I spoke in the first person always and never tried to act like I was the authority, the wise one, the all powerful.

I think writing articles like "Recent Sightings/Slightings" would be better taken if they were postured in a similar vein. Why not change the heading of this feature to read: "PERSONAL INSIGHTS" and add the byline: "(This feature is a springboard for all artists to lend their views on art criticism related matters concerning metalsmiths)"? Possibly *Metalsmith* magazine would receive more articles on art criticism from more of us in the field, if this occurred.

I would hate to think that the Metcalf vs. Bennett comments would turn into people taking sides on either behalf and thus have the magazine turn into some kind of venting conduit that raged on and on. What we need here is what both Metcalf and Bennett believe in and want to see happen. I believe that is positive, intelligent, and productive Art Criticism of the field. Articles that will be informative bring us all closer together and interested in participating. SNAG is a small organization, and there are many of us out here who feel afraid of putting forth our ideas and thoughts because we may feel we don't know enough four syllable words or have spell check. Let's see if we can work on getting more input and know whatever we write is about ourselves and that others can understand that and read those words and enjoy and gain from whatever is said without taking it too personally.

Sincerely,
J. Fred Woell

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Metalsmith has always welcomed contributions from individuals who are willing to express their ideas in print. I encourage the submission of column length essays concerning any and all subjects that impact individuals interested in metals, jewelry, adornment, and issues of design, production, and criticism in our field. There is little that would make both the publishers and myself happier than a lively, spirited, and open discussion of our field, from a variety of viewpoints.

FCL

February 18, 1999

Dear Editor,

I loved this issue! I see this type style more often lately, but for some reason, its use in *Metalsmith* "opened my eyes." While it may be difficult at times to follow with the eye, maybe it's because our traditional way of reading is so ingrained that the eye rebels against the "indistinct line" of the sentences. *Metalsmith* continues to reflect art in new and exciting

ways. Thank you for "forcing" me to use my eyes differently and thus, to see anew.

Your editorial was insightful. The baggage with which we view art is, in essence, the way we view our world as a whole. Oh . . . to be rid of our baggage! Is it possible for us to choicelessly see and respond to the (art) world without the "facade" of our conditioning? To not name it, judge it, or categorize it? To immediately be aware of our reaction to a work of art, whether positive or negative, whereupon we just might actually *see* (or be?) the object without being "disconnected from it" by our beliefs, traditions or cultural identities? To view it with new eyes?

Barbara Stutman's "Reforming Identity" was very indicative of our "society of women" which in turn demands that men "follow suit" with their own forms of oppression. Again, our baggage . . . . Can we not have even one thought of what others think about what we create, wear, how thin we are, how buxom, how macho, how "facho" (a term heard years ago, but I fail to remember the woman's name who coined it). Can we stop "falling prey" to advertisers and fear mongering? Fortunately or not, our baggage "asks" some of us to express our frustrations and our revelations in our art. . . and there is so *much* wonderful art these days! Well done!

Deborah Hamm
Arvada, Colorado

February 23, 1999

To the Editor,

I would like to express my thanks to Jamie Bennett for his elaborations regarding Art vs. Craft in "Recent Slightings" as printed in *Metalsmith* Volume 18, Number 5. I regard this as a difficult and touchy subject and generally misunderstood. That is why I welcome Bennett's clear statements on the significance of conceptualizing in jewelry making – at least for those makers who intend their work to be more than just decorative – and would like to add a few of my own thoughts.

It never fails to astound me when I witness any one discipline's determined efforts to ward off more or less energetically intermingling with any other discipline in order to retain its purity. Or when I see how jealously the autonomous art world as a whole seems to guard its borders to an infiltration of applied art (and I assume that the situation in America is similar to that in Europe). Isn't it high time to open our minds to welcoming even more influences, minglings, surprising innovations in what or how we create? After all, here we are at the turn of the century, of the millennium even. History or Art itself wouldn't be what it is without some daring changes. So what's all the fear about?

Conceptualizing, as in having an idea about what one is making, as a predicate to that making (to pick up some of Bennett's wording), is in my opinion giving works a soul. It renders the work beyond decoration, and, for those who see or sense it, there is definitely more, a kind of charged energy.

I do not think that the "crafts world" needs fear being endangered. On the contrary, I have personally found that searching to translate a conceptual idea into a tangible piece of matter often calls for conscious and extensive experimentation with craft techniques. It means exploiting the individual material properties and processes until the result conveys the "message" as it were.

I am very much convinced that craft will never lose its lure. Even when the pendulum swings out towards a certain dematerialization of art (or jewelry), it inevitably swings back and with it almost a sigh of relief for something tangible to get one's hands on. So if at times, a number of jewelry artists may chose to work in a conceptual way and eschew traditional craft techniques, this certainly will not apply all of the time to all of their work. Picking up on Bennett's example of Otto Kuenzli, I may add that when taking into consideration this outstanding jewelry artist's whole body of work, there should be no doubt that idea and craft can be mutually supportive. As I see it, a number of pieces created without the use of craft within the context of many year's work will never come near to endangering the "crafts world."

The jewelry world will always range from traditionalists to designers to conceptual makers (to be honest, I never really know what to call myself – jewelry maker, goldsmith, jewelry artist . . . .) Shouldn't the contemporary jewelry world be thankful for and even welcome the influence of autonomous and conceptual art, and with them a range of new jewelry possibilities?

Sincerely
Andrea Wagner
Amsterdam/The Netherlands

March 5, 1999

Dear Editor,

Tho' I am not a metalsmith per se I am an avid fan of your exquisite magazine. . . it brings such a flow of inspiration to my assemblages and constructions!

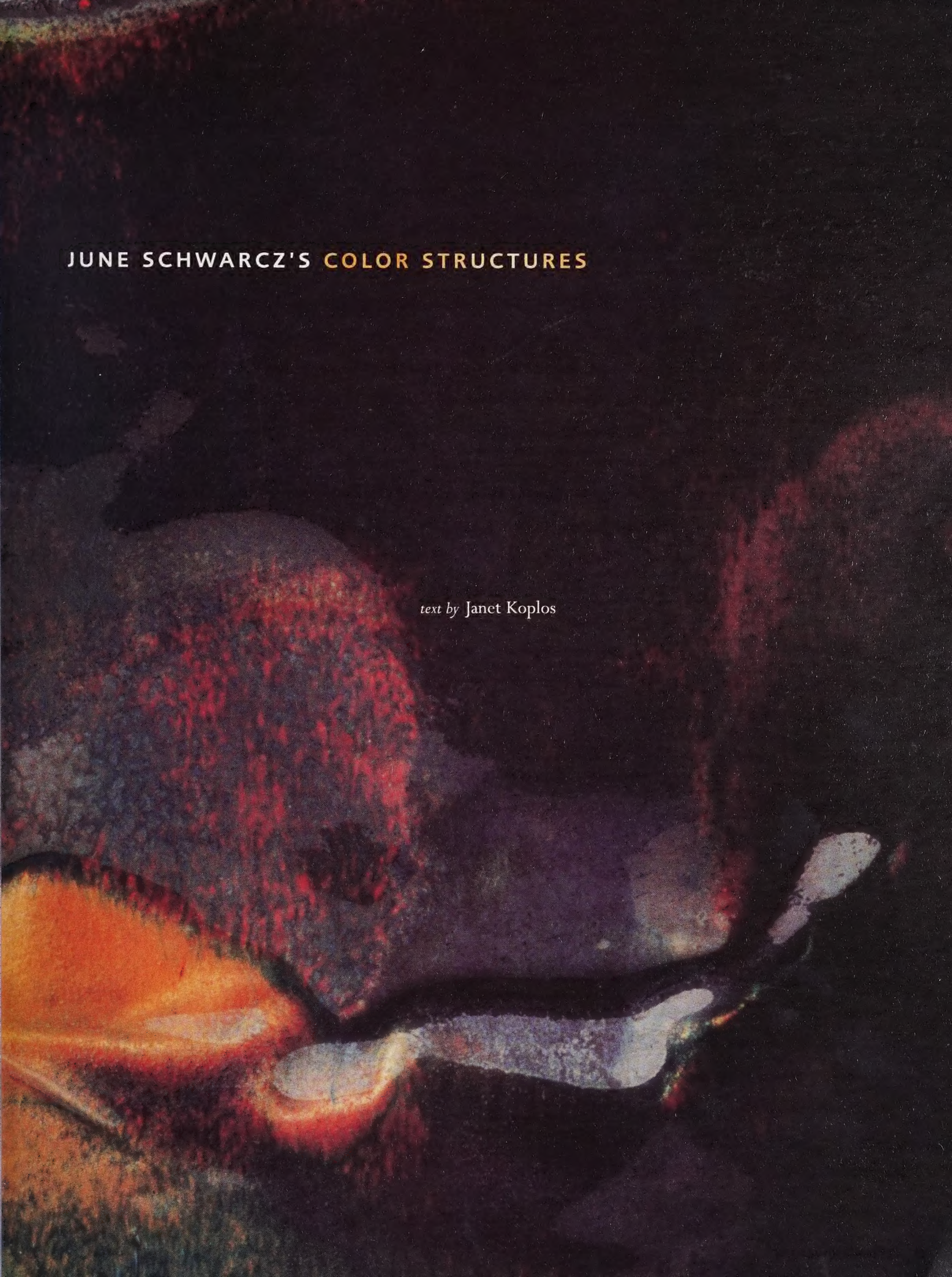
Not only are the artists featured talented, they are so generous in their information and the photography, the layouts, and lately even the typeset are all so visually beautiful. . . .

Thank you for creating such an outstanding publication!

Julie Pearson
Traverse City, Michigan

this page
Many-Colored Vessel, 1991
electroformed copper foil, enameled
$10^{3}/4 \times 4^{1}/4 \times 2^{1}/2$"
Photograph by Lee Fatherree
Collection of the American Craft Museum

opposite page
*Many-Colored Vessel (*detail), 1991



JUNE SCHWARCZ'S COLOR STRUCTURES

text by Janet Koplos

THE PAINTERLY ASPECTS

June Schwarcz's works exemplify a complicated phenomenon that sometimes puts off the art world: they concentrate on surface but they occupy three-dimensional space. The fact that color and surface texture are central has more in common with painting than with most modern sculpture, but nothing else about the work follows the traditions of painting. Of course, that is as it should be: this is not painting but another art form, with its own distinctive range of characteristics, and in the exploration of this form Schwarcz has been an innovator.

Schwarcz likes bowls, which, being familiar, conventional, and symmetrical, are the least sculpturally active of her objects. Bowls lack the individuality and idiosyncrasy of most contemporary sculpture, although, to be sure, they have a long history of being aesthetically as well as functionally valued for their own purposes. In Schwarcz's hands, this age-old serving object offers itself rather than that which it contains. Bowls are numerically predominant among the earlier works; later she uses split cylinders and other distorted forms which reach a little more toward sculptural invention. But nearly all the works in this show, even the bowls, literally add other dimensions to the surface/painting dialogue: they engage the actual depth measurements of real objects, and they contribute effects of highlight and shadow in which the appearance of color is changed as a result of its occurrence in space rather than on a single plane.

The couple of flat pieces included in the show are the easiest to discuss in painting terms. *Fugue in Japanese #1*, 1961 is like a fragile and more ordered Richard Diebenkorn "Ocean Park" painting. It also, however, looks glazed like no painting I can think of. The surface sheen is not like varnish but like syrup in its glossiness. Tiny reflections catch in the glaze – not enough to identify what's reflected (which would be distracting) but just enough that the work seems to respond to its environment, pulling in glints of the real world. More than three decades after she made that work, Schwarcz borrowed from another modernist hero: Mark Rothko. *Red and Yellow in Two Parts*, 1995 looks like Rothko's glowing rectangles and squares of color. This piece is constructed a little like a military ribbon, with a small horizontal rectangle at the top and a

A COMPLAINT

One wonders about the American Craft Museum's priorities. There's always a problem of space; the museum has a habit of cramming every show into a single floor, whether it fits or not. June Schwarcz's enamel-object retrospective, *Forty Years/Forty Pieces*, which was curated by Carole Austin for the San Francisco Craft & Folk Art Museum, was

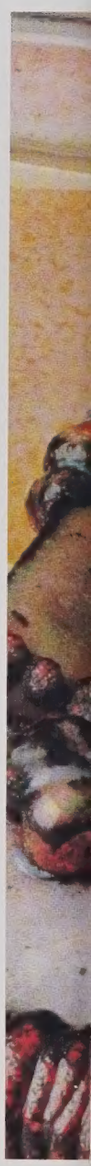
above
Brittle Vessel, 1996
electroplated copper foil, fine wires
fused into enamel
6 x 6 x 5"
Photograph by Lee Fatherree
Courtesy of the Susan Cummins Gallery

(with a few additions) squeezed into the display case that runs down one long wall of the museum's basement level, in the general-purpose room that's also used as an auditorium. Works exhibited in that case are protected and secure, so small things, such as jewelry, are often shown there. But Schwarcz's pieces are not so very small, and they are three-dimensional, so they were not particularly well served by the case.

The objects were crowded – sometimes works were as little as six inches apart. This is cause for dismay if one expects a distinction between the presentation of shop merchandise and art works. It was difficult to look at a single object in isolation, to let it

larger vertical rectangle below. The parts are not given simple monochrome treatments; they are moody, atmospheric blends of hues. Schwarcz sticks to object scale, so *Red and Yellow* is vastly smaller than a typical Rothko painting. But in another way she expands on his precedent: instead of just creating misty radiance, she can multiply the effect of luminousness with the light that is captured under the glassy surface of the enamel.

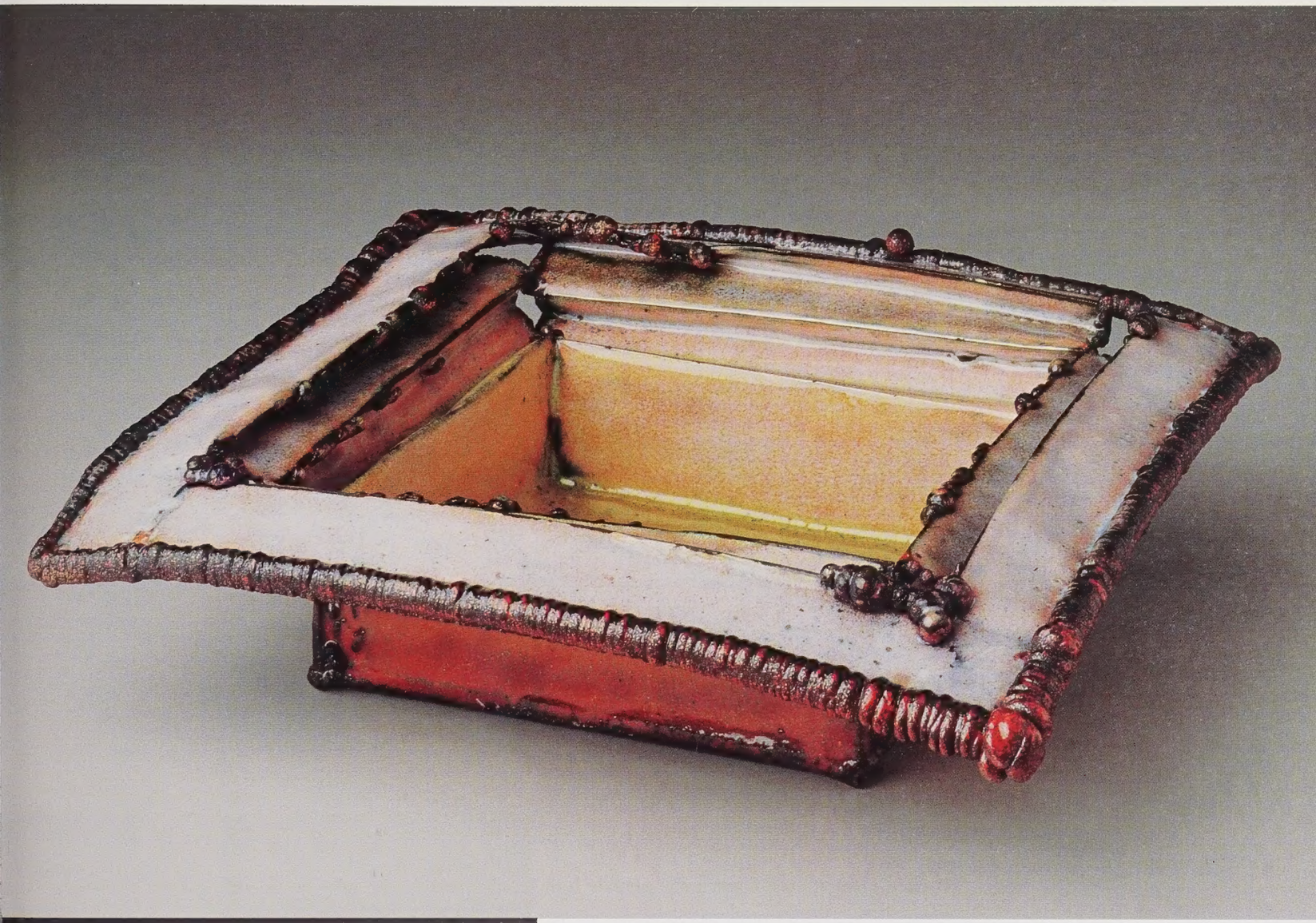
The flat works are merely the easiest ones to associate with painting, not the only ones. Again and again, the reference arises, probably because Schwarcz herself is aesthetically aware of the precedents. She makes no bones about the work she admires and is influenced by. Her acknowledgment gives viewers a kind of permission to see in these works anything that they wish. *Blue Coral Bowl*, 1961, for example, is furnished with certain associations by its name alone. There's a real-world linkage of color or texture to a known material, and there's also the imaginative linkage of supposing for an instant that it might actually be that substance. This work might also make one think of Vincent van Gogh's *Starry Night* or others of his works with impastoed surfaces in which the brushmarks have a life of their own. However, here in Schwarcz's bowl, the texture marks are relatively long in relation to the size of the object. This drawing-out communicates a slower and more tranquil feeling than van Gogh's works.

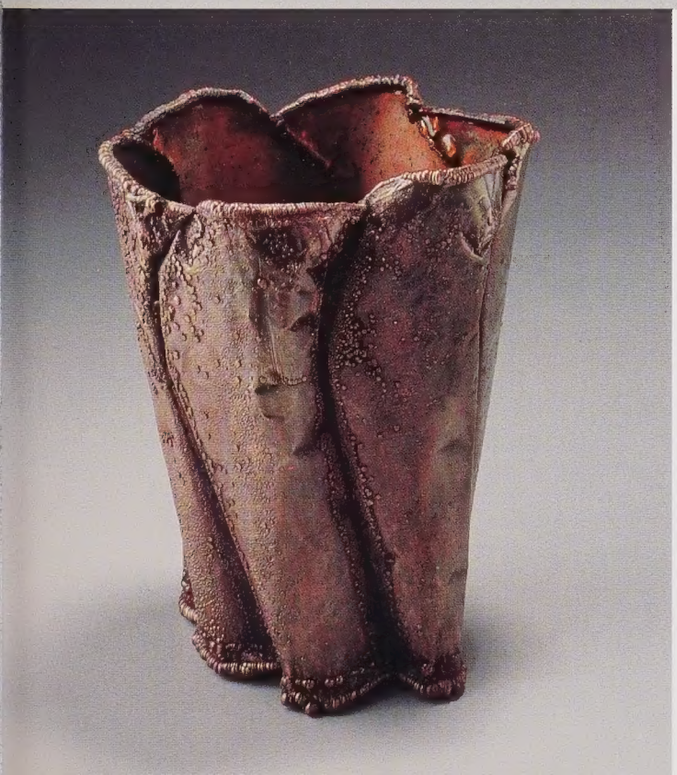


PROCESS AND BORROWED IMAGERY

That a painting allusion that can be discovered in a flat or a three-dimensional work doesn't automatically make it more interesting than other pieces. The objects succeed or fail on their own terms. They have to be so coherent – or so surprising – that they're persuasive and make viewers forget all questions or objections. *Rough Patterned Bowl*, 1969, *Blue and White Bowl*, 1970, and *Plique-à-Jour Vessel*, 1974 all have coarse exteriors that bring to mind clusters of barnacles on a hull or pier, or mineral encrustations on ancient artifacts recovered from sea beds. None of them, however, appear to be *about* these associations. One simply notes the visual association and moves on to think about other things.

Allusiveness doesn't seem to be Schwarcz's message. It's more likely that in these works she was just yielding to a process capability and seeing what enameling would allow her. She sets crude exterior surfaces against smoother and light-infused interiors of aqua (like water or morning skies) or fluid reds (lava, perhaps, or Georgia mud?). Still more ethereal is the interior of *Spice Bowl*, 1979. This work has a honeycomb-patterned exterior that is yellowish like wax, or might also make one think of earthen medieval tiles. Both resemblances contrast with the pink-and-blue-spattered intangible space evoked inside the bowl, which brings to mind a sky.





above
Apollo's Pool, 1993
electroformed copper foil, enameled
2 1/2 x 9"
Photograph by Lee Fatherree
Courtesy of the Sybaris Gallery

left
#2141, 1999
enamel, brass, wire brush patina
6 1/2" diameter
Photograph by Lee Fatherree
Courtesy Susan Cummins Gallery

These kinds of effects are gratuitous. They're not reasoned, just enjoyed.

In her interests, her influences, and her subjects, Schwarcz tends to be quite transparent. *Portrait of Fujiwara Mitsuyoshi*, 1979 shows a Japanese influence that is equally declared by the title. The portrait is a detail of a garment, specifically the angular accumulation of layering in medieval court robes. She borrows the image from Japanese art history, just to see how the flow of garments looks in fluid enamels. *Lillian Elliott*, 1981, a tribute to a Bay Area fiber artist, borrows the structure of textile or basket slits in strips that hang from a cylindrical neck. Schwarcz does it in her own medium, and the purpose is no more than to do it in her own medium. *Benin Bowl*, 1984 looks like bronze; *Raku Vessel*, 1981 looks like pottery. Just so you know it can be done.

CLOTHES AND SEWING

Starting with *Paisley Patterned Vessel* in 1987 Schwarcz looked deeply at clothes. This piece is slightly reminiscent of a bishop's miter, although it is open at the top. It is fashioned of the oranges and golds of the Near East or India, with purple inside. It is easy to see how Schwarcz got from *Issey Miyake*, 1991 to *Split Red Vessel*, 1992. *Issey* is a white crumply cylinder with random tucks (or scars), a seam stitched together, and an irregular rim, deep red on the inside and ragged around the "hem." *Split Red* stands up much like *Issey*. About six inches in diameter with a two-inch gap up one side, it is again imperfect, but much simpler than earlier works. Schwarcz relies on color to activate the form here. The vessel is an exciting abstraction extrapolated from the more referential form of *Issey*.

Around the late '80s and early '90s, Schwarcz reaches her creative prime. Consider the dazzling display of an untitled 1989 vessel from the Elesser collection, a squared vase with a pinched pleat at each corner, the outside lead gray and the inside salmon dissolving to white at the narrow bottom so that it glows as if there were an unseen light source inside. The form seems invented just to carry these color effects. Another miracle of color is *Twisted Opal*, 1991, a cylinder whose elements spiral gracefully, not busily. It's a mottled peach pink, paler at the bottom than the top, that seems to shrug upward as it blushes. The shape is like a swirling skirt, but more contained.

work its magic. In addition, a display case encourages a frontal orientation. That would be acceptable if Schwarcz's works had a single best viewpoint, but that is only sometimes the case. This limited, narrow view was worsened by reflections on the display-case glass. In other words, the showing of Schwarcz's work in the ACM was only a cut above poor. Many of the works are shown to better advantage in the beautiful catalogue (although, of course, two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional objects come with their own set of problems).

The clothing inference appears in other works as well, ones with titles that refer to darts,

above left
Vessel with Horizontal Lines #2, 1994
electroformed copper foil and lines, enameled
$9^{1}/_{4} \times 7 \times 7$"
Photograph by Lee Fatherree

above right
Vessel with Dark Band, 1996
electroformed copper foil, enameled interior, patinated exterior
$8 \times 4^{1}/_{2}$"
Photograph by Lee Fatherree
Courtesy of Susan Cummins Gallery

left
#2138, 1999
enamel, black patina, silver plating
$7^{1}/_{2} \times 5^{3}/_{4}$"
Photograph by Lee Fatherree
Courtesy the artist

bands, and collars. Moreover, Schwarcz discusses (in the video interview that accompanies the show), the relationship between the making of the electroformed shapes and the use of patterns and cutting fabric in the process of sewing clothing. The imagery of sewing is thus structural to the work, not applied, yet it is a structuring option that she chooses to use and to reveal, which gives this aesthetic characteristic personal meaning in her body of work.

NEW SURFACES

Vessel with Horizontal Lines #2, 1994 is a new thought, yet also, to a degree, a regression. The shape is casually but not inventively irregular, and the surface is once again the *raison d'etre* of the work. This cylinder is slightly flared toward the top and slightly pinched and flattened. But what catches one's eye are the fine lines, like the patterns that waves leave on a beach, accompanied by aggregations of tiny gray balls, like the sediment left as the water recedes. This granulation, unlike the precious ancient variety, has a gritty character; the surface of this cylinder looks almost polluted or derelict. Appreciation of the beauty of stains and rust is a very 20th-century attitude. Schwarcz's work nearly always embodies some sort of internal tension, or implication of inappropriateness or imbalance. These, too, are contemporary feelings: a modern embrace of the precariousness of existence rather than a seeking of the comforts of the known, the standard, or the soothingly pleasing.

The untitled vessels from 1995 in the collections of the MFA Boston and the Denver Art Museum eschew gloss. The patinated exterior surfaces of these two-part forms are extremely quiet. They acquire most of their character from color, sober as it is, and from constructive details. These are far from being uneventful. The Boston piece has a rim like a thick scar. Its upper two-thirds, which can look like a warm peach, orange, sienna, or red-brown, depending on the amount and angle of light, is puckered along its bottom edge, where it is compressed to fit into a stiff dark-brown band that has a line of stitching along its edges. The Denver piece is a flat leaden gray-brown above and angles in to a narrow straight skirt of white with a blush. A scratch through the dark patination, arcing like a rocket trajectory, exposes the gleam of copper underneath. In both these pieces the associations of color and surface again relate to metal and, by extension, the factory. Once more Schwarcz makes modern surfaces engaging the beauty of harshness and rawness, even as the construction speaks of the more delicate constructions of sewing rather than the sturdy and practical armatures of architecture.

But the ACM added insult to injury. Consider the above-mentioned level of presentation and add the fact that the show was shut down, boarded up, for two weeks late in its run. The entire basement space was given over to a benefit exhibition and sale called *Living with Craft*, which was billed as "Unique Room Settings by Top Designers Incorporating Museum-Quality Contemporary Craft" [actually, the announcement card said "Comtemporary Craft," believe it or not]. One understands that this event was fashionable and fund-raising. The museum

above
Ancient Altar II, 1996
electroplated copper foil, enameled
and oxidized
$4^{1}/_{2} \times 11^{1}/_{2}$"
Photograph by Lee Fatherree
Courtesy of the Sybaris Gallery

IN SUM

Schwarcz's work as a whole is characterized by abstraction of color, mood, light, space. But it is important to note that these abstractions almost never take one to a "separate place" and certainly never present an explicit subject or message. They seem at most to be tributes to material, playing at the possible variations. In terms of art, they come with certain limitations of aspiration. Yet in terms of craft, they are rich with implications, suggesting comfort, history, service, labor, and, indeed, the elevation and honoring of material for itself, all of which adds up to a distinct aesthetic position.

One looks at all these examples with their various interests and notes the lack of a magnum opus, the apparent absence of an ambition to pack multiple artistic capabilities into a single, summary work. This is an absence one notes again and again in the crafts media. It may be a product of the thin, occasional, and friendly nature of crafts criticism, and a certain reluctance by critics to take the risk of singling works out, but more likely it's the result of a difference in priorities between the makers of art and crafts. Schwarcz, like most craftspeople, admits to her fascination with process. No one chooses enameling in order to make a big statement about our time; an enamelist is one who loves color, who likes modesty of scale, who enjoys the capturing of light in glossed surfaces, who revels in the incremental development of a texture. Enamelists are of necessity patient. They lose themselves in the rhythm of small, repetitive actions; they take joy in the finesse of a perfect line or a perfect gradation. To make a statement, to make an image, to make a massive presence there are other, more appropriate and efficient means. Schwarcz yields to the construction of intimate beauty in which vision and touch are equally giving of pleasure. There is both personal meaning and societal value in that.

June Schwarcz: Forty Years / Forty Pieces was curated by Carole Austin at the San Francisco Craft & Folk Art Museum, where it was shown June 6 - August 9, 1998. It traveled to the American Craft Museum, New York, September 17 - November 13, 1998, and will be on view at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, Hawaii, May 11 - July 11, 1999. It is accompanied by a 96-page catalogue with brief essays by Austin and William Harper. M

needs money. But abruptly preempting a scheduled show in the midst of its run would seem to violate the trust between an artist (and her dealers) and the institution, as well as between the institution and its viewers. What if someone came from out of town during that two-week period, when, according to published information, the Schwarcz exhibition was on view, and found the exhibition closed? The museum's treatment of this show seemed callous.

JK

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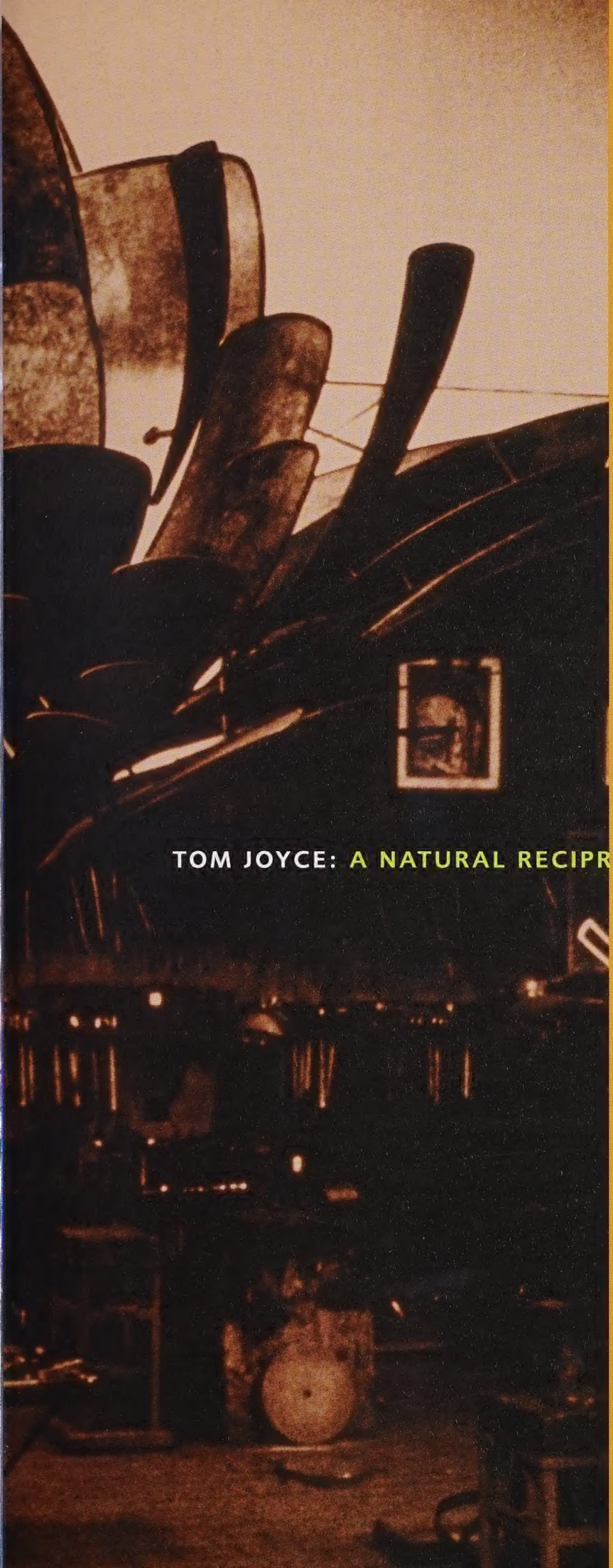
The editor would like to thank the San Francisco Craft and Folk Art Museum, Susan Cummins Gallery, and Sybaris Gallery for their generous assistance in furnishing images for this article.

right
Blue and White Bowl, 1970
electroformed copper foil, enameled, electroformed design
5 1/2 x 5"
Photograph by Lee Fatherree

below
Blue and White Bowl, 1970
Detail

below right
#2084, 1996
enamel, copper, black patina
10 1/4 x 5 1/4"
Photograph by Lee Fatherree
Courtesy Susan Cummins Gallery



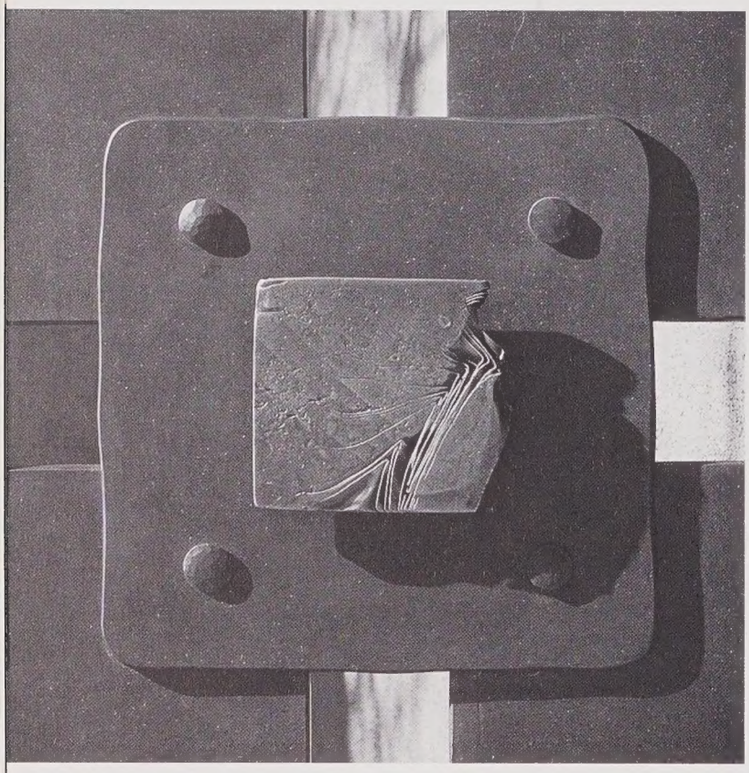
TOM JOYCE: A NATURAL RECIPROCITY ALWAYS IN MOVEMENT

text by Ellen Berkovitch

Lighting Centerpiece, Phoenix Museum of History
forged iron, mica
90 x 192 x 108"
Photograph by Kate Joyce

IN 1998 SANTA FE BLACKSMITH TOM JOYCE PARTICIPATED IN EIGHT GROUP EXHIBITIONS and two solo shows; completed a majestic lighting centerpiece for the Phoenix History Museum; designed and made a seventy-panel entry gate for the Albuquerque Museum's Sculpture Courtyard; and curated an exhibition of forged metal work from south of the Sahara in Africa. He lectured at the Artist-Blacksmith's Association Conference and seven other venues. He presented demonstrations at half a dozen formal studio tours and many informal ones. Additionally he fulfilled numerous private commissions.

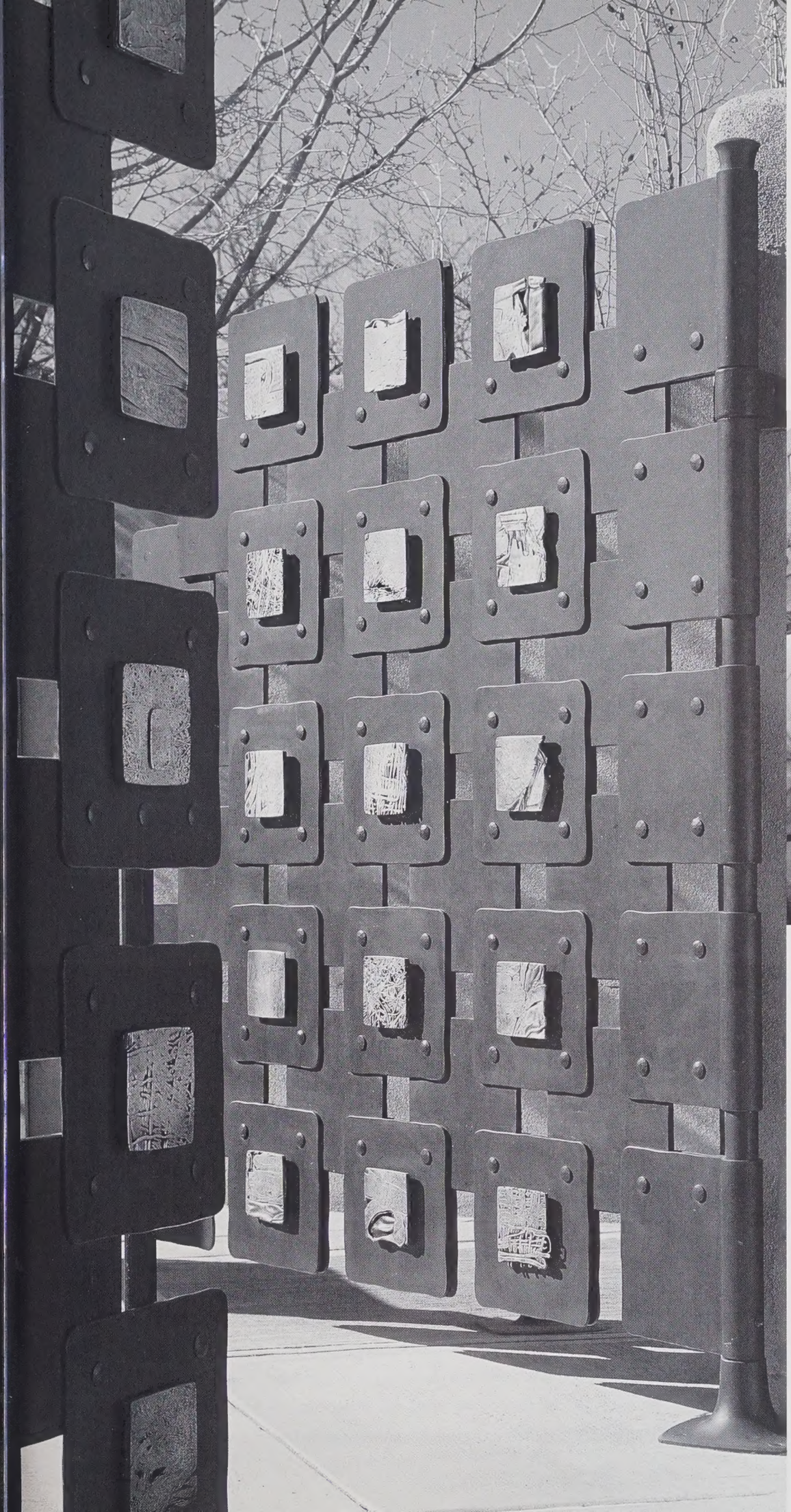
Impressed by such prodigy, one is tempted to make an equation between the energy manifest in Joyce's work, and the self-replenishing stream of ideas that guides it. One wants to know: Where do the ideas come from? How have praxis and philosophy entwined in this blacksmith, whose education, given at the top of a 15-page resume reads "Life Experience?" Joyce is forty-one, and he left formal education at the age of sixteen.



Joyce is a self-taught student and eloquent transmitter of African societies' complex histories with iron. Forged metal objects from various regions and makers in Africa commonly embody "meaning that stimulates a memory of (their) prior use," Joyce wrote in the catalog essay for *Life Force at the Anvil: The Blacksmith's Art from Africa*. Curated by the artist at the University of North Carolina at Asheville last summer, the exhibition will travel to the National Ornamental Metal Museum in Memphis from February 7 - April 18, 1999. Joyce points out that the role of iron in Africa is implicated from the genesis with the shape of the continent. Farmers and miners altered Africa's topography by clearing it and ploughing it and hoeing it for their sustenance. The blacksmith in Africa has functioned in a critical role: both midwife to the birthing process that is the smelting of iron, and inventor of adaptations changing raw material into forged useful tools. Few contemporary metalsmiths encounter, as the blacksmith does, the paradox of a 3,000-year old living history (the Hittites began using iron in 1500 B.C.E.), combined with the extinction of their primary material, virgin iron. This contradiction instigates in Joyce a sense of mission, both to extend the knowledge of smithing history and to invoke a dialogue about it, even as he sets out daily for his shop down the driveway from his house.

When Joyce was 14, he arrived in El Rito, New Mexico. The rural northern village enjoyed an agricultural economy, and it attracted solar pioneers like Peter Van Dresser, who built the first solar house west of the Mississippi with a roof made of beer cans. In El Rito Joyce met friends such as Jim De Korne, an inventor and frequent contributor to *Mother Earth News*, and Peter Wells, a printer who had taught himself smithing techniques by which to fix his presses and who rented Joyce his first studio for twenty-seven dollars a month. He also met older farmers "who were very special as a bridge to a community I wasn't born into."

In El Rito, an agricultural implement may have been forged by a local smith, purchased locally, or acquired by mail order from a catalog. Joyce encountered a late-19th-century, mass-manufactured grubbing hoe that had been patched seven times. That the tool had been repaired so often constituted its visible history, speaking to the object's valuation by its user, to the user's critical need for it, and to the fact that not everything in industrial society is discarded. Joyce learned his skills at the anvil, first by fixing farmers' tools. This preceded by some years his learning that, in certain African cultures, it is believed that a life force resides inside iron objects and is activated by the hammer. With remarkable integrity to traditions in which the blacksmith stands literally at the center of village life, Joyce's current practice celebrates the embodied



opposite page
Rio Grande Gates, Albuquerque Museum of Art (detail)
Photograph by Nick Merrick

left
Rio Grande Gates, Albuquerque Museum of Art, 1998
forged iron, salvaged materials
81 x 141 x 10"
Photograph by Nick Merrick

above
Rio Grande Gates, Albuquerque Museum of Art, in progress
forged iron, salvaged materials
81 x 141 x 10"
Photograph by Kate Joyce

history of use that the iron object in particular and the material of iron in general may represent.

Addressing a group of college students touring his studio, Joyce selects random items from his personal collection that inspire a presentation on everything from the economy of use, to design history, to the user's hand. A grain sickle was short in part because of ergonomics – to permit the user's hand to keep grain in a bundle as he/she was cutting – and in part because a minimal use of iron was all that was required to make a functional tool. An axe was necessarily heavy to fell large timbers; but an extravagant use of iron made the tool cumbersome to use.

Learning how a smith resolves a design issue has been critical for Joyce. Beginning about twenty years ago, Joyce designed a curriculum that encompassed the historical and regional study of iron objects from places like New Mexico, Mexico, and Spain. He would look to these objects as models for a lively practical investigation into the aesthetics of making. For instance, in the 12th to 13th centuries in Europe, with its attendant high Gothic ornamentation, tool steel was precious and rare. This meant that few tools, rather than many, were used to craft intricately designed objects. Joyce achieved his ornate brazier with a similar minimalism of tools: he forged one chisel for different radii.

Delivering the Society of North American Goldsmiths' 1997 keynote address, Joyce suggested that one's personal inquiry takes root at a particular site. For Joyce that site is the intersection between need and use. When he realized, as he accepted more architectural commissions, that his work centered exclusively on private home-building clients, he began innovating creative approaches to use the scrap from those projects. In 1984, Joyce was invited by Czech blacksmith Alfred Habermann to assist in a Renaissance restoration project near Prague. A scarcity of materials even in the midst of enormous industrial output, which was diverted to military use in the Soviet Union, meant that Habermann's scrap bucket consisted of only a handful of pieces, yet even the smallest of these would be forged into rivets. This experience cemented Joyce's commitment to creative re-use.

Joyce's folded vessels resulted from his architectural scrap. They express in their seamed and layered compositions experiments in proportional geometry. *Fibonacci Bowl*, named after the 12th century Italian mathematician, was designed based on the geometry of the golden section – the ratio on which Greek Temples were laid out and built. The proportionality of Joyce's other vessels ally to a natural order of numbers, like the spiral pattern of rows of seeds in a sunflower. Yet, the bowl folded to the formula was lifeless without the force of fire and hammer. The unfolding, then, of the object became metaphoric for the replicating impulse of nature.

For the historian of iron, the Tesuque, New Mexico flea market is a living treasure trove. Joyce's acquisitions of iron objects (so many at one point that he hid the booty in the shop bathroom shower) have facilitated both his historic and ethnographic knowledge, and his interest in curatorial projects. Joyce lent about a third of the objects to *Life Force at the Anvil*.

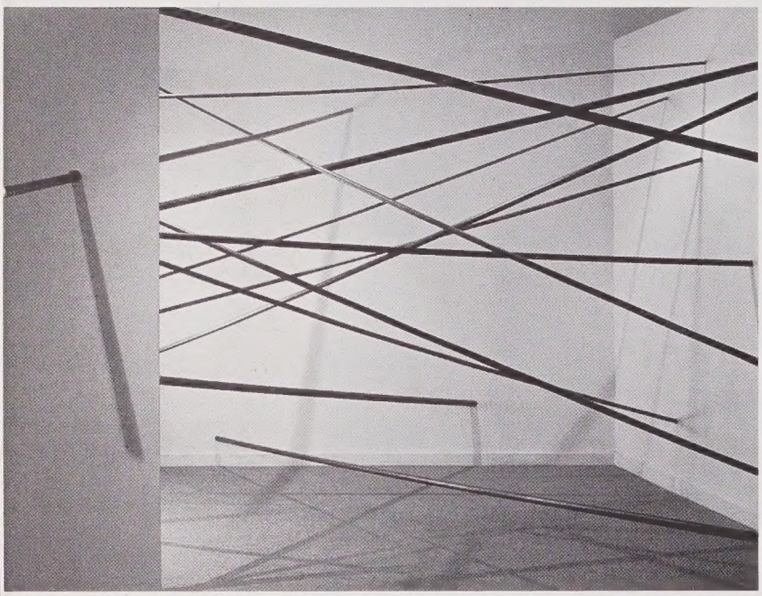
In reading Joyce's notes in *Life Force at the Anvil* one comes to see how smithing permeates into even the furthest corners of his experience. Camping in Iceland several summers ago

above
Lighting Centerpiece, Phoenix Museum of History, 1998
forged iron, mica
90 x 192 x 108"
Photograph by Nick Merrick

above left
Lighting Centerpiece, detail
Phoenix Museum of History
Photograph by Nick Merrick

with his wife Julie and daughters Kate and Irene, Joyce and his family came upon a stunning discovery. They had pitched their tent among hillocks and dunes where the sea grasses had eroded away, leaving barren footprints marked with encrustations of hollow iron tubes. The geologically occurring iron had been created from the plants' contact with mineral-rich seawater. The Joyces' *discovery* was one the Vikings had come upon centuries before, and used as their primary source of smelting iron. The find for Joyce was rendered more significant because rolled mild steel bar used in blacksmithing today is a composite material with an ever diminishing content of virgin iron. Hence all iron-containing objects – shopping carts or kitchen knives, for instance – are by extension metaphors for sustainability and duration.

On a day that some college students visited the studio, they encountered a working session under way. Three truckloads full of objects, collected from an abandoned homeless encampment along the banks of the Rio Grande near Bernalillo: diverse industrial refuse – old sign boards, engine parts, refrigerator cooling coil, barb wire, chain link, high chairs, box strapping, mattress springs – was neatly piled on the shop floor, awaiting compression in the hydraulic press and a sustained process of forging, boraxing, hammering, and shaping. Out of this process Joyce seeks patterns by which to sculpt, panel by individual panel, a gate.



above
Pierced Room Installation
mild steel
240 x 240 x 240"
Photograph by Nick Merrick

right
Room Divider
forged iron
60 x 220 x 16"
Photograph by Nick Merrick

The gate, finished five weeks later, combines an impression of armor and diacritical gloss. Seventy relief panels jut subtly from a matrix of panels with apertures big enough for fingers to reach through. The miniaturization and compaction that Joyce has achieved are metaphoric of his belief that the ground of blacksmithing is affiliated with all previous ground. Significantly, the flotsam selected from the river is literal materialization of the human community both invited in and excluded by the museum gate.

Concurrently, Joyce wrote and won a grant to train students identified as being at risk of quitting school in smithing methods. Ninety percent of the sum is directed to compensating students for their labor while they learn. A critical goal of the project – re-imbuing the knowledge of the students' own history through hands-on practice – reflects Joyce's commitment to community.

Of the many meaningful projects that Joyce has created, none mean more to him personally than the crafting of the baptismal font for the Santa Maria de la Paz Catholic Community of Santa Fe. Conscious of the basin's ritual significance as locus of memory, Joyce has said that the font represents the next generation's immersion in the life stories of their forebears. He invited parishioners to donate iron objects that held special personal significance. With an archivist on hand to record the stories in writing, Joyce received the memories in material form: a key a nun found on the day she decided to pledge, a garden fence from a grandparents' plot, tire chains, wagon parts, and a Penitente nail from a *Morada* that burned down.

Physical reinstatement – the method of actually attaching a project's belonging to a community and congregation by acceptance of their gifts – is signature Joyce.

Yet equally revealing is a project he based not on reinstatement but on dispersal. When, at his SNAG talk, Joyce showed slides of cellular structures of the human body and enlargements under a microscope of the granulitic forms of metal, he was certainly recalling his *Pyrophyte* sculptures. *Pyrophyte* was coined by Joyce to describe the process in nature by which a seed germinates from fire.

Joyce's dances with fire are an ongoing routine: selecting a glove that won't singe a finger, snuffing a spark that is making a burning smell in the shop, segmenting the pattern in a metal

section heated to 2000 degrees. There is no better place to witness this choreography than in *Pyroglyphs*, a video of Joyce sculpting, made by Steina Vasulka, an international video artist originally from Iceland who resides and works in Santa Fe. Vasulka's previous video work favored elemental imagery such as the pounding surf or the screaming air brakes of a semi. In Joyce's shop she found a new manifestation of the Norse God's lair, ringing with the percussive insistence of air hammers: the offering of hand to fire in the creative venture.

Joyce, who has closely attended to the role of the book as both a perpetuator and diminisher of human memory (before books, memory was retained through oral tradition) found piles of abandoned books near the Santa Fe dump. He worked instinctually to make out of these books a body of sculpture emblematic of knowledge's use and disuse. In a microchip society the book approaches obsolescence. The sculptures anticipate in their transformations the changing meanings of the modern and the contemporary. In the resultant sculptures the volumes have often totally disintegrated in contact with heat, until all that remained was a gaseous resin, a phantom. Impressed on a tablet or platen is a light char and the impress of still visible words imprinted onto the plate. Another work, hanging as a pendulum near the studio doors contains 700 pounds of compressed newspaper – a powerful totem.

In Joyce's work one has to visualize the past and future encroaching upon one another by means of consistent consciousness. Every item coming into his hands – whether mild steel bar, or an iron-rich object – preserves a history. This history in turn reminds one that to work with metal is to reactivate its embedded meaning.

The weighty lighting centerpiece that now hangs in the Phoenix History Museum incorporates mica in its vaulting, aspiring wings. The wings are a visual referent to plow points, and the mica a material that conveys the idea of the fire by which the phoenix symbolically rises from ash. Joyce suggests that the light expresses a turbulent glowing cloud. Its position inside the history museum institutes a prolonged awareness that in Phoenix, as in blacksmithing, every civilized refinement finds its history in fire.

When Joyce makes something or stands beside what he's made, he expresses a benevolence between people and objects. In Joyce's hands, objects express the act of embracing. M

To order catalogs of *Life Force at the Anvil: The Blacksmith's Art from Africa* or to make a contribution, contact Tom Joyce, P.O. Box 5311, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502; or call Ligia Bouton at 505-982-0485. Ninety percent of the proceeds from the exhibition catalog will be used to fund the International Metalsmithing Scholarship for research in forged metal arts around the world. Special care will be taken to promote exchanges in places whose blacksmithing traditions have not been well studied.

Ellen Berkovitch is a writer who lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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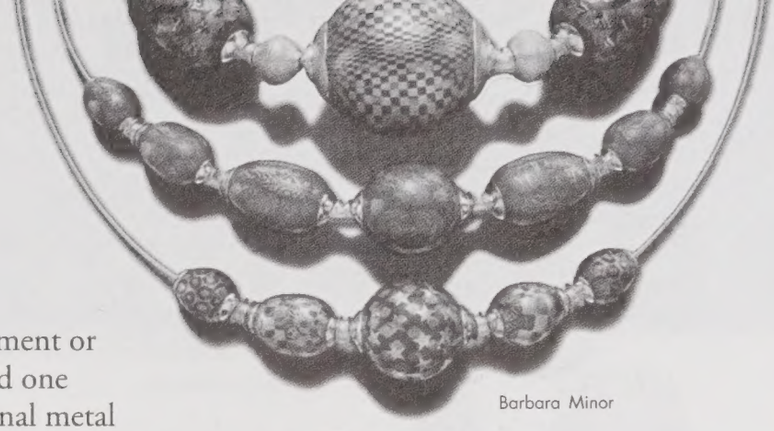

Barbara Minor

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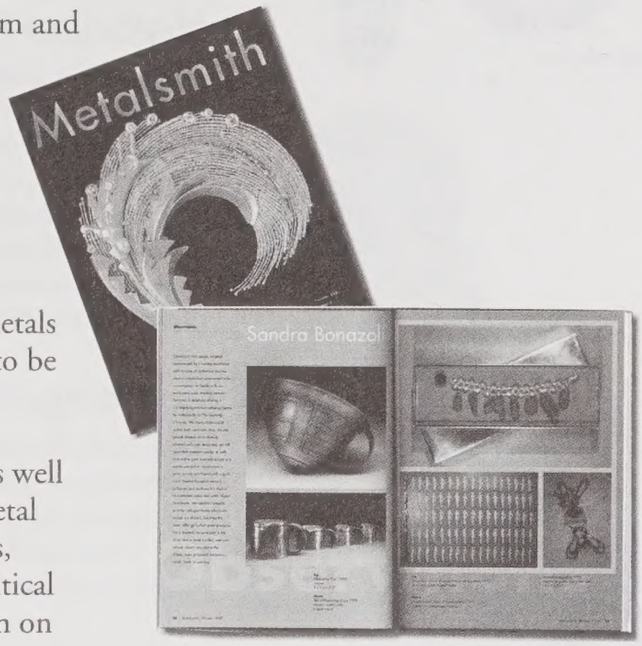

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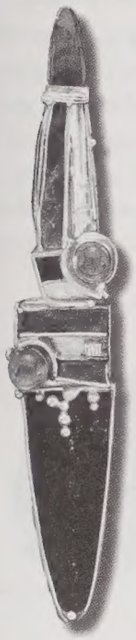

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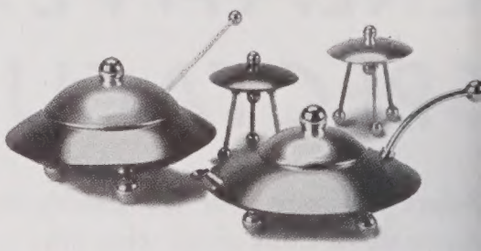

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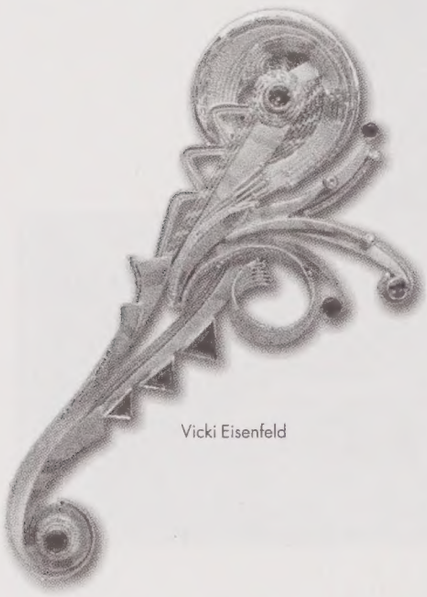

Vicki Eisenfeld

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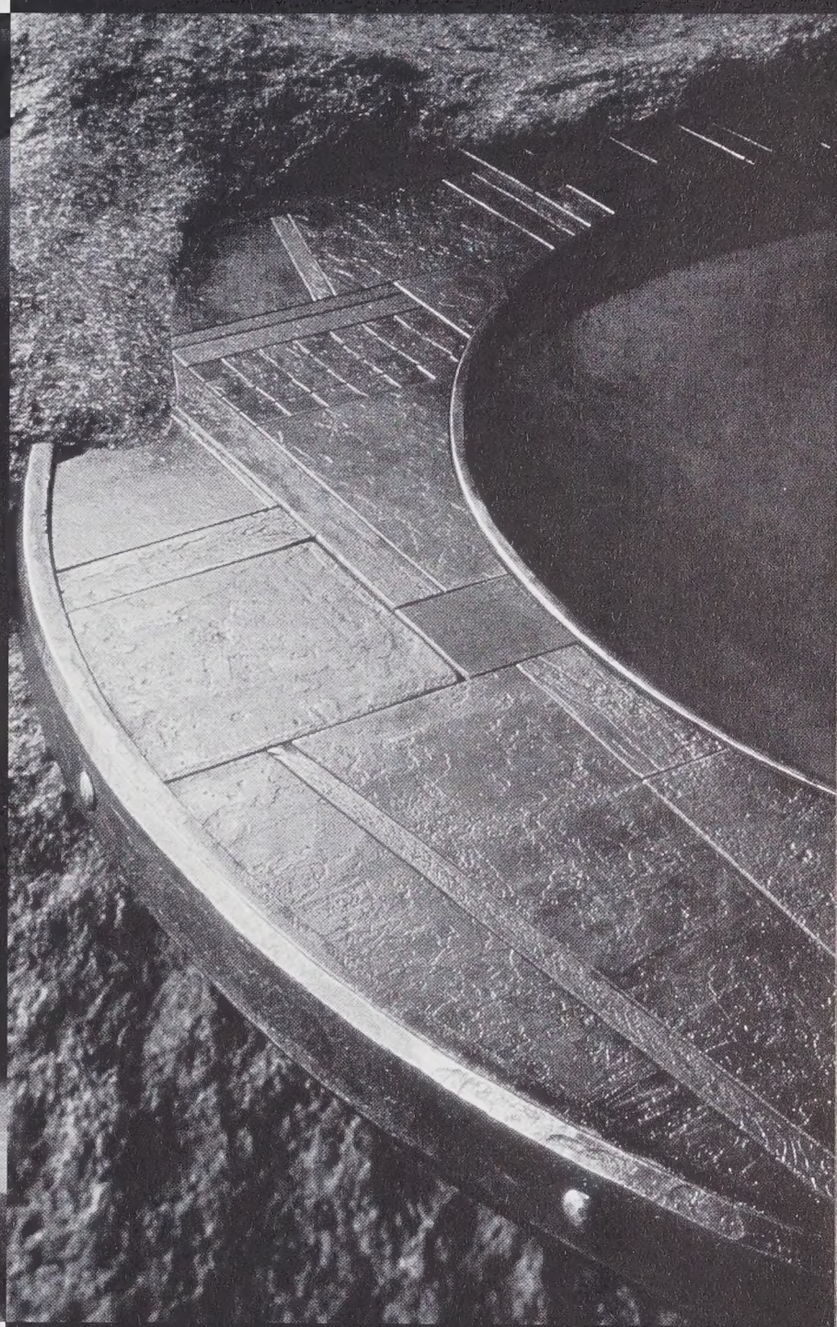
Charles Crowley



opposite page top
Pyrophyte
fully ignited newspaper, cast iron, cable
48 x 32 x 32"
Photograph by Nick Merrick

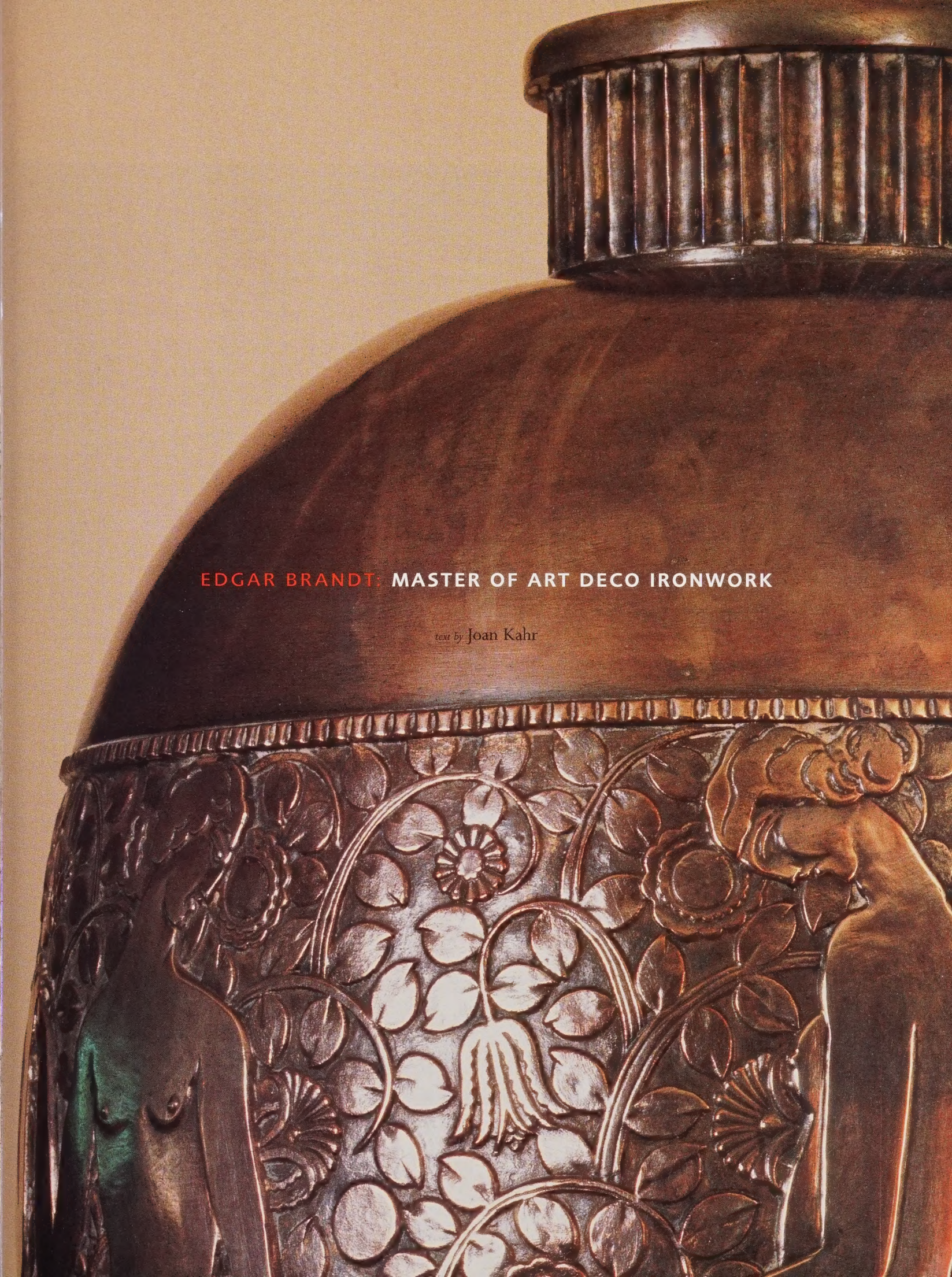
opposite page bottom
Rectangular pieced plate bowl, 1998
forged iron
3 1/4 x 23 1/4 x 18"
Photograph by Nick Merrick

above left
Baptismal Font, Santa Maria de la Paz, 1994
forged iron, bronze, granite
42 x 72 x 40"
Photograph by Nick Merrick

above right
Baptismal Font, Santa Maria de la Paz (detail)
Photograph by Nick Merrick

this page
Potiche, 1925
silvered bronze
48 1/2"
(One of a pair of vases exhibited in Brandt's stand at the 1925 Exposition)
© Anthony Isreal Photography

opposite page
Potiche (detail), 1925



EDGAR BRANDT: MASTER OF ART DECO IRONWORK

text by Joan Kahr

Stairway of the Au Bon Marché department store in Paris, 1923-24
gilt bronze railings and balcony grilles by Brandt; Louis H. Boileau, architect.

In the 1920s Edgar Brandt (1880-1960) was the preeminent artist/blacksmith working in Paris, and despite more than eighty competitors, Brandt's decorative ironwork was the most sought after. When a large body of his work was seen and admired at the 1925 *Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris, he became known internationally.

The story of how Brandt, a young man from a middle class French family, became an artist-blacksmith, an inventor, an entrepreneur – in short, a self-made man – is also the story of the evolution of metalwork in the early twentieth century. Trained at the technical professional school of Vierzon (not far from Orleans), Brandt, acknowledged by age fifteen to be the finest blacksmith at Vierzon, graduated in 1898 after forging his masterpiece. The school, founded in 1887, is still in existence today.

After a tour of military service, Brandt arrived in Paris in time to see the Exposition Universelle, a paean to the Art Nouveau movement. By 1901 Brandt began his career designing and making costume jewelry out of silver; wrought iron; or iron accented with gold and/or semi-precious stones. Encouraged by the response to his early pieces, he set up his first forge on the rue Michel-Ange in 1903. Attuned to the technological advances that were on the horizon, the young smith investigated their potential. The oxy-acetylene welding gun, pneumatic hammers, milling machines, and presses were about to turn the ancient anvil and hammer into adjunctive rather than primary tools for the smith. Most of all Brandt was attracted to the welding gun, exhibiting great foresight in realizing that bunches of grapes, pine cones, holly berries, and overlapping oak and ginkgo leaves could be made in quantity, greatly augmenting design possibilities. Heretofore inconceivable and/or highly labor intensive motifs of flora and fauna could now be combined with handwork resulting in a new wrought iron aesthetic. Many of his competitors were opposed to these scientific advances, preferring instead the tried and true ancient methods of their craft.

Brandt's prescience led to his first large commission: the doors and window grilles for the French Embassy in Brussels, 1911, richly adorned with pine-cones and needles. This was followed by his most prestigious assignment, a great stairway in the Louvre, the *Escalier Mollien*, which he decorated with gilt rosettes, classical acanthus leaves, and berries. No sooner was this commission completed than World War I began. With his induction into the army at age thirty-four, Brandt's attention was absorbed by a different kind of iron.

Seeing France's unpreparedness for the war, Brandt received permission from his superiors to work on improving mortars and several inventions. His successful production of a 60mm mortar for the army led him to be called upon by the French army later on in his career. Brandt possessed the unique ability to switch gears and focus either on his ironwork designs or on his inventions for the national defense as well as the contracts and patents that each entailed.

As France turned to reconstruction after the war, Brandt resumed his ironworking career and greated an expanding clientele who appreciated his elegant products and enjoyed visiting his new headquarters at 101 Boulevard Murat. In 1920 with the help of architect Henri Favier,

this page
Chandelier (similar to Resille, made for 101 Boulevard Murat), 1921.
wrought iron, glass
30 x 26"
Courtesy Christie's Images and Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

opposite page
Chandelier
Detail

Brandt constructed a marvelous building which contained the newly equipped workshops, the offices, and the exhibition salon for the *Etablissements Brandt*. By 1921 beautiful wrought iron balcony railings, doors, window grilles, lighting fixtures, and stair railings created for the Boulevard Murat not only enhanced the building but set the style that is now called Art Deco.[1] Upon its completion the building won first prize for architecture, and in 1984 it was given landmark status.

A commission in 1920 for the transatlantic ocean liner *Paris* resulted in forged stair railings for the Grand Salon which Brandt beautifully conceived as wavy bars of iron emerging from circular starfish. This whirling pattern was made up of many identical sections that curved up the stairs and around to form the double-sided balcony railings. Surrounded by Moorish decoration and highlighted by mosaic-tiled arches leading to an iron and glass skylight, these were among the most joyful and engaging railings produced by Brandt.

As the French looked back at the decimation of an entire generation of men, they planned many tributes, and by the early 1920s several war monuments were being erected. Edgar Brandt was involved in a number of them. He was commissioned to design and produce the bronze-work that would cover the *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier* under the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. With his architect Favier planning the space, the ironsmith produced a circular plaque decorated with laurel leaves and berries overlaid by twenty-four radiating swords, the center of which held a sawed-off cannon head containing the eternal flame.

As he worked on the monument, Brandt, who had lost a dear friend in the war, imagined that this man was the Unknown Soldier. Upon its completion in 1923, this moving tomb reflected France's loss of over 1.5 million men, and today it is a poignant reminder of all people who died while serving their country. Brandt was also involved in the *Bayonet Trench Monument* which commemorated the horrific two-day battle at Verdun in 1916, in which 300,000 infantrymen died after being buried alive in their trench after a German bomb attack. The ironsmith's huge double paneled iron entry door for the mausoleum was marked by a laurel tree edged at the top and bottom with rows of heavily hammered bayonets. Bisecting the door is a double-edged medieval broadsword pointing downward. The door vividly brings to mind the mournful battlefield where the only thing visible after the bombing were the rifle's bayonets sticking up out of the dried earth.

When Brandt began his career, decorative artists had several important venues in which to show their work. Aside from the *Exposition Universelle* of 1900, there was the *Salon des Artistes Decorateurs* and the *Salon d'Automne*, to name just two. Brandt displayed his art objects, alongside the jeweler René Lalique, the coppersmith Jean Dunand, the fine furniture maker Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann and other talented individuals. Brandt was awarded many prizes during his career. As early as 1908 he won a first class medal from the *Societe des Artistes Français* and a Medal of Honor from the S.A.F. in 1923. Later in his career he received several levels of the Legion of Honor.

above
Zodiac screen, 1926
gilded and silvered wrought iron, lacquered wood,
each panel 66 x 23"
Ironwork by Brandt; frame by Jean Dunand. Stamped "E. Brandt"
Exhibited at the 1926 Salon des Artistes Decorateurs, Paris
Courtesy Christie's Images and Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

right
Zodiac screen (detail)

When the *Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* opened in Paris, visitors entered through the Brandt designed principal entryway, the *Porte d'Honneur*. Brandt's doors, grilles, and balcony railings were found in many of the French pavilions including Ruhlmann's *House of a Rich Collector*, an imaginary home which featured not only Ruhlmann's furniture but also the *objets d'art* of his illustrious peers.

Brandt's finest work and the capstone of his career was to be seen in his own display room in the metal arts section. In a long narrow octagonal room Brandt decorated the walls in a faux-metal egyptianizing pattern of fans and lotus flowers. On one of the two long walls was a console table with *S* shaped supports, and sconces. On the other wall was a five-paneled, free standing wrought iron screen, *Oasis*, which featured a flowing fountain surrounded by huge tropical leaves with electroplated brass chevron stripes and stylized flowers. *Oasis* became Brandt's most acclaimed work, and its frozen fountain motif was copied by designers and architects the world over. Two large neo-classical *potiches* were placed in niches on one of the octagonal walls with the grille *Diana and the Deer* (a seminal Art Deco motif) between them. In the center of the room was a wrought iron chandelier with twenty lights enclosed by acid-etched Daum glass shades. Below, a circular iron table drew the eye from the other wrought iron pieces, such as the grille (*Les Bouquets*), and several firescreens (*Danseur, Le Nid*) and torcheres (*Elegance*). At the 1925 fair Brandt was deemed above competition; he served on the committee for the metals division and was also a judge. Many of Brandt's competitors such as Paul Kiss took part in the exposition. Brandt was in good company, and it is fair to say that ironwork, in general, was probably the most successful decorative art form at this long awaited exhibition.

In October, 1925, the Cheney Brothers' silk company celebrated the opening of their New York headquarters at 34th Street and Madison Avenue. The exterior and interior ironwork, sixty tons of it, was designed by Brandt, made in Paris and shipped to New York, and miraculously installed without difficulty. The exterior ironwork, still visible today, remains a tribute to the influence of French design in America.

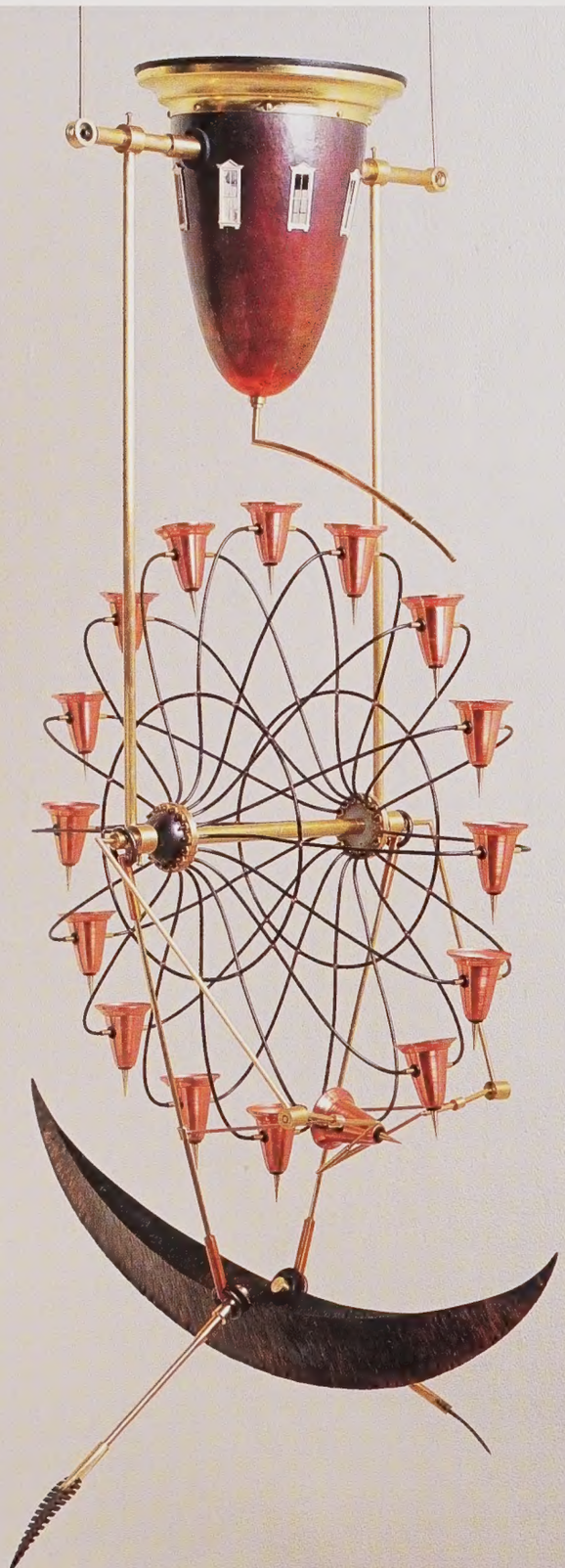
It is fitting that Brandt's superb craftsmanship, elegant stylization, technological virtuosity, and his commitment to aligning art and industry should be looked at anew as the twentieth-century comes to a close. M

Joan Kahr is a decorative arts historian and frequent contributor to Metalsmith. Her most recent book *Edgar Brandt: Master of Art Deco Ironwork*, is available from Harry N. Abrams, Inc..

[1] The term "Art Deco" is derived from the French *les arts decoratifs*. It was not until 1969, when the Englishman Bevis Hillier came to America and helped to organize an Art Deco exhibition at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, that the term came into popular usage.

OBSERVATIONS

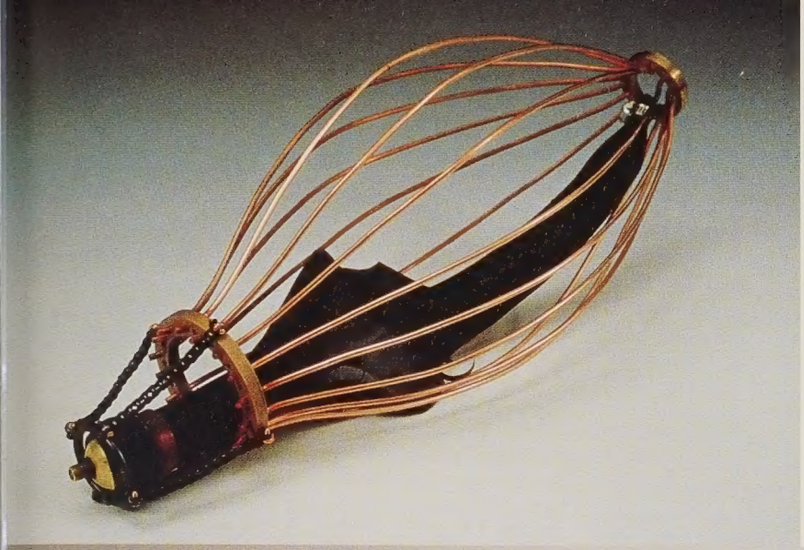
the work of EVAN LARSON



From ancient Egypt to the third quarter of the nineteenth century metalsmiths were often called upon to construct instruments of measure and precision. However, such marriages between art and science became ever more rare as twentieth century society increasingly divorced science from art and separated disciplines into hermetic enclaves of specialization.

Evan Larson attempts to reconcile such divisions in a series of fantastic, precise, and evocative instruments which would have been equally at home in the laboratory of Lavoisier or the studio of Vermeer.

Finding inspiration in musical instruments, Hero of Alexandria, and ancient Egyptian water clocks, among other far ranging sources, Larson eschews the assumption that science is based on cool rationality while art finds its effects in the heat of emotion. His imaginative and, at times, seemingly impossible devices ever remind us that human creativity is an amalgam of heart and mind; and that meaning and inspiration cannot be located simply in a particular cognitive site in the brain, but rather find their greatest expression in the unified field of mind and body, soul and biology.

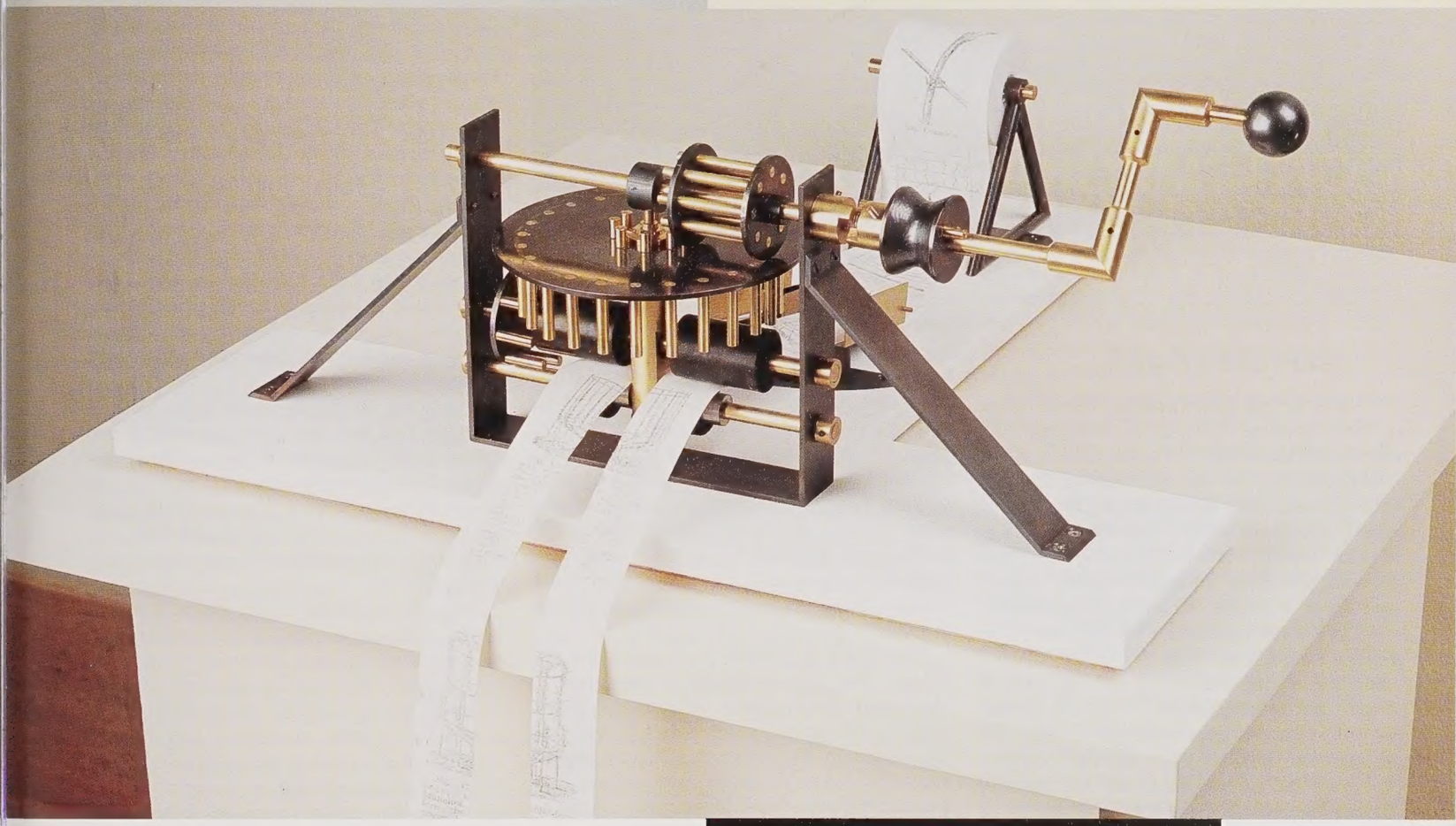


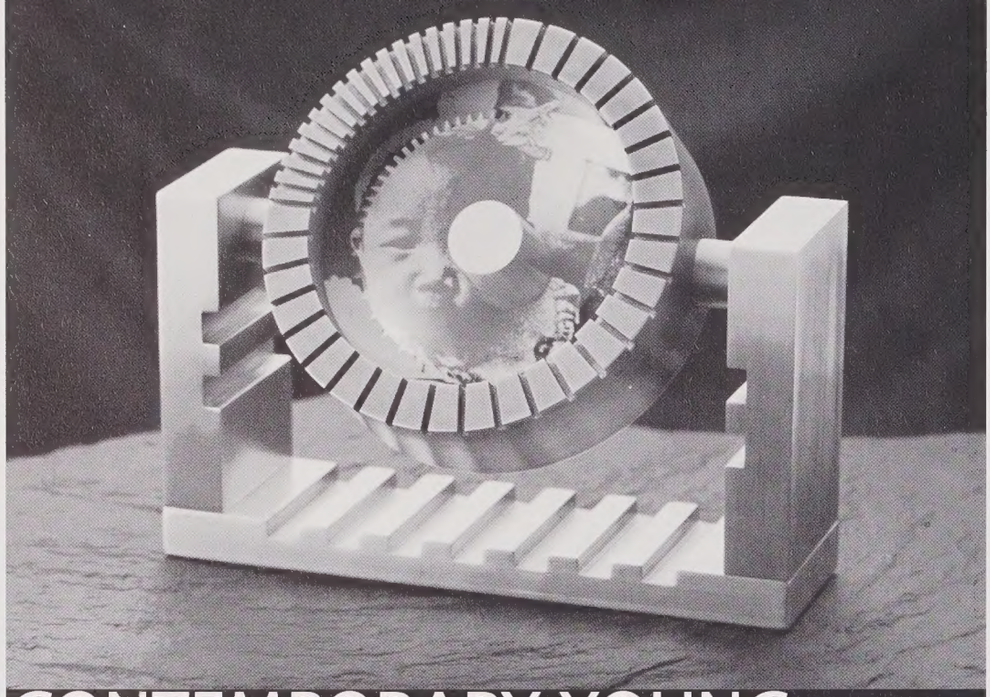
opposite page
Wheeping Wheel, 1998 brass, copper, silver, rubber
26 x 24 x 48"

left
Metal Forming Test I, 1997 brass, copper, gear chain, rubber, hose clamp 16 x 8 x 8"

belos
Thought Splitter, 1997 brass, red brass, copper, steel, rubber, paper 26 1/2 x 23 x 7 1/2"

bottom
Displacement of Craft by Machine, 1998 copper, brass, rubber, glass, steel blade, correction tape 10 x 8 x 8 1/2"





CONTEMPORARY YOUNG KOREAN METAL ARTISTS

MONTGOMERY COLLEGE, ROCKVILLE CAMPUS ART GALLERY
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND
FEBRUARY 16 – MARCH 6, 1998

text by **GRETCHEN RABER**

Due to the energy of Professor Komelia Okim at Montgomery College in Maryland, the community as a whole and particularly the metal arts community has had the frequent opportunity to be educated by exhibits of Korean metal artists. The most recent, *Contemporary Young Korean Metal Arts Invitational: Three Year Traveling Exhibition through America, Canada and Korea*, is further evidence of the involvement of Korean metal artists in interpreting their cultural experiences. There is a reason, beyond what one might expect of the common national origin of the participants, that the exhibit evidences a cohesive design aesthetic. All of the exhibitors are between thirty-five and forty-five. They are highly educated with the majority holding two MFAs. Many are on the faculty of colleges or universities in the US and Canada. Most significantly, many of the exhibitors are, to varying degrees, former students of Professor Okim. Common techniques, design elements, and metal aesthetics appear with frequency and reference those of Komelia Okim. The other commonality is that all have practiced or taught in the field for over ten years. The title of the exhibit not withstanding, these are substantial professional artists who have a substantial commitment to the world metal working community.

There are expressive references to nature and individual worlds perceived through the Asian experience. The connections to the teaching of Okim appears in various guises though the use of Keum Boo, hammered edges and external framed boundaries of brooches with individual interpretations.

The show includes wonderfully convoluted and esoteric artists' statements to bemuse the observer. The poetic nature of these statements attempts to reveal a connection between the internal emotionally personal message and the external metal media. There is a contrast between the spiritually soft idea and the very hard reality. Intrinsically, however, artists' statements are quite problematic. They attempt to explain in words the very thing that is created in metal. It is almost an admission of failure. Critics, reviewers, and exhibition visitors have the luxury of their own interpretation, regardless of the initial intent. Theoretical or psychological ramblings are occasionally charming, sometimes confusing, and always extraneous. The word does not make the object one molecule greater or lesser.

The exhibit is comprised of several distinct groups. One of these groups is composed of artists who employ mixed media and/or found objects. The term "found object," however, should not to be confused with the collage approach of some American metal workers. The Korean artists use found objects more as materials than as individual parts.

Regardless of the impossibility suggested in Eun-Mee Chung's statement of the mountains "...express(ing) their endless mysterious and fearful feelings," the use of found tree bark in *Sottae 97-05* is successfully treated as an abstracted shape, part of her aptly named *Mountain Series*. She employs simple natural materials, as do others in the exhibit. The bark plays a coloristic, textural, and symbolic role in the piece. Her collage and painterly approach augment the metal parts. Her work serves as an example of the fragmented framed sections that several artists employ to capture gems, bark, enamel et cetera. Angular forms are juxtaposed with soft curved volumes. Her work relates strongly to Mi-Youn Kim, who uses soft cloisonné enamels in place of found materials. Also in this sub-group are Mee Yeon Jang, Mira Choi Tyson, Kyung Joo Noh, Myung Jin Ko, Youn Shik Chung, and Jung-Hoo Kim.

Youn Shik Chung is most successful in taking the concept to the limit. His brutally coarse objects are manipulated and placed in refined balance. Equally successful is Jung-Hoo Kim, who uses the background stones as a platform for her painterly and sculptural style. The only visual problem is her *human being* figure. It is far too derivative of the work of Ernest Trova.

The sculptural component of the show is a diverse one. The vessels and objects are craftful and technically sound. Young Kwan Jung creates visually precarious balances with disparate elements. Young-Ock Kim constructs visually disturbing photo-etched images in massive, machined, and milled metal cases. The viewer is left to wonder what distorted things are happening to these children. Wha Kyung Nam uses hammered volumes to show her interest in the human form. In one of the shows, more amusing pieces a visually, monumental form is only gradually understood as the viewer's eyes discover the tiny repoussed hand at its side. In contrast, vessel maker Hye Won Lee uses visual lightness and a subtle mastery of form. Coarsely scratched surfaces shimmer on austere geometric volumes both to create emphasis and harmony.

One heavy weight contender is the work of Yeun Hee Ryu. She invents wondrously massive copper platforms for sets of objects. *Munjin* is a group of paper weights of some substance. The power of these objects is in the successful integration of the idea, the technique, the form, and the surface. Here the cultural image is subtle and inferred.

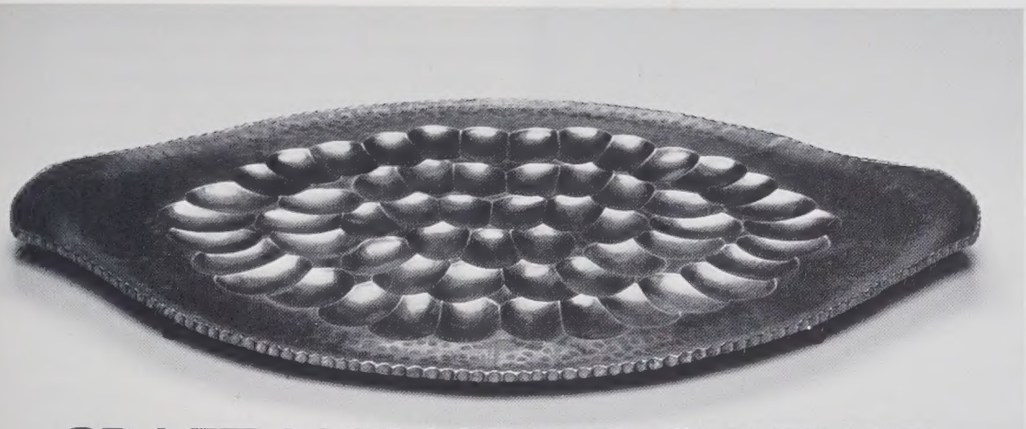
Uniquely positioned in this exhibit is Kiwon Wang. Pursuing another direction, her work reflects cultural imagery at its most playful. The use of paper and metal is gracefully light. In *Dream II*, the combination of two-dimensional, translucent graphic membrane and delicate metal spiral rib create a rare synergy. Similarly delicate, the rings of Yong Jin Chung are powerfully compelling designs because of their scale, form, and integration of idea.

This is a strongly professional show that stays safely in a contemporary mode, but "Young Koreans" does not chart any new territory. For an exhibition of " young" artists, it is not quite what one might expect.

Gretchen Raber is a goldsmith who lives in Alexandria, Virginia.

above left
Young-Ock Kim
Eye #971 (table ornament), 1997
copper, brass, iron, lens
5 1/2 x 4 x 2"

above right
Myra Mimlitsch Gray
Handwrought Oval Serving Tray, 1997
copper
3 x 41 x 28"
Photograph by Robert Storm



CRAFT MEDIATING CULTURE:
MYRA MIMLITSCH GRAY, DARRIN JEZIORSKI, JULIA JIANNACOPOULOS, LISA NORTON, JONATHAN WAHL

ELSA MOTT IVES GALLERY/YWCA
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
OCTOBER 1 - NOVEMBER 1, 1997

text by **KENNETH L. AMES**

It is remarkable how impressive and inspiring a small exhibition can be. *Craft Mediating Culture* consisted of just fourteen objects by five artists in metal. Sensitively installed in the intimate, apartment-like spaces of the Elsa Mott Ives Gallery, each object spoke eloquently on its own and in concert with its neighbors. The result was a thickly textured experience, rich in conceptual and visual variety, in wit, humor, intellectual subtlety, and nuance, and above all in provocative commentary about craft, cultural history, and the meaning and direction of art today.

Curator Jamie Bennett's introductory statement established a helpful conceptual framework for the objects. As a historian of the so-called "decorative arts" and long-term observer of the evolving condition of the arts in American society, I found his words encouraging. They reflect and promote, it seems to me, a major and highly beneficial reorientation of the art community.

Five of Bennett's points strike me as particularly critical to understanding the exhibition and the larger phenomenon it represents. First, he points out that the works exhibited were selected to exemplify contemporary historicism in American metal. All are products of purposeful engagement with the past, with cultural history and iconography. Second, he maintains that the "reinvestment in historicizing has reenergized the language of the field and revived a passion for making," a critical point born out by the substance of the exhibition. Third, he tells us that the artists included in the show "work with and within the history of the crafted object" and have "a sincere respect for the history of metal," both of which have an impact on how they think and make. Fourth, the artists subscribe to "the belief that the hand-crafted object has the capacity to dignify and reflect cultural activity." Finally, the exhibition demonstrates convincingly that evoking recognizable objects facilitates communication or, as Bennett puts it, "allows for the establishment of content and the potential for comment." I take this to mean that abstraction and formalism are dead.

This short synopsis of Bennett's statement reveals its revolutionary intent but hardly does justice to its sophistication or subtlety. Bennett's words merit many pages of commentary and perhaps even a major conference. But that is a matter to be explored elsewhere. At the gallery in the fall of 1997 his words were only part of a multi-vocal exploration of the positive ramifications of historicism in American Metal.

The objects themselves offered immediate reassurance to any who feared that historicism might be another inhibiting orthodoxy. As Bennett assures us, just the opposite appears to be true. The five artists who exhibited, most of whom are well-known to readers of *Metalsmith*, are remarkably diverse in their engagement with the past, their approach to metal, the nature and extent of their cultural commentary, their concern for a cognitive or affective reading of their work, and in many other ways as well.

Julia Jiannacopoulos exhibited a single object, *Handmade by Anonymous*, a braided rug of steel wool. "Steel Wool" is an oxymoron in its own right. Jiannacopoulos takes irony a step further by using this emphatically masculinist industrial-age product to critique a stereotypically feminine, archaic, domestically-produced household object usually viewed through the rose-tinted and blinding lenses of nostalgia.

Darrin Jeziorski showed three wall-mounted structures, all of which framed stalks of golden wheat within sleek metallic surroundings reminiscent of kitchen stoves and agateware canners. Jonathan Wahl's contribution documented his continuing dialogue with historic American tinware. Of all the artists in this show, Wahl seems most firmly planted in a historic craft tradition. But this latter-day tinsmith has turned trickster, inventing new functions for tinware and subverting the old.

In *Liberty/Trinity*, Wahl uses piercing, eminently suited to lanterns, pie safes, sieves, and the like, to adorn and problematize a slogan-bearing bucket. *State/Hood* is a playful series of graduated toleware trays, each dedicated to a different state; thirteen were on view in the gallery. *American Heritage Series II, Pitcher* is an outrageous multi-handled tinware vessel some six feet high, simultaneously evoking and parodying the oversized objects that sometimes served as trade signs in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America and raising more cultural questions than I can begin to list here.

Myra Mimlitsch Gray's distinctive eloquence was apparent in the four intriguing, almost magical works on view in the gallery. What is crucial within the context of this exhibition is that it further and very impressively documents the expansive and expressive range of possibilities held out by historicism. Equally illuminating are the ways Mimlitsch Gray's objects bask in the tradition of the precious and well-wrought object ,yet simultaneously comment on that tradition and combine cool analysis of the formal and structural properties of objects with sensual warmth and emotion.

Mimlitsch Gray's approaches to craft, metal, culture, affect, and viewer engagement are at marked odds with those of Lisa Norton, at least as represented in this exhibition. Norton's three works are deadpan near-replicas of banal aspects of American material culture of the recent past, objects aggressively lacking both beauty and charm. *Not Responsible for Lost or Stolen Articles*, for example, recreates the cheap, laminate-covered coat racks found across America in shops and restaurants primarily — and depressingly — remarkable for the complete absence of sensitivity to physical surroundings they so compellingly display. Her work is, I suppose, a revival of sorts of American realism of the 1930s. The message today is as ambiguous and contradictory as it was then.

Perhaps even more fascinating than the individual objects in this exhibition is the movement toward history and audience engagement they represent. Modernism had its virtues but it also had its costs, increased cultural distance between artists and audiences among them. Bennett is right, I think, in stressing the communicative superiority of recognizable objects. This exhibition well demonstrates his point. It also shows that informed dialogue with, critique of, and commentary on past or present culture using familiar forms can draw on and generate multiple layers of reference and resonance, something we cannot claim for abstraction.

Craft Mediating Culture presented a choice selection of recent works demonstrating the increasing importance of history, culture, continuity, and tradition evident today in the arts. Without making too much of a fuss about it, the exhibition gently promoted the communicative advantages of tradition-grounded craft, a matter worth exploring more fully at another time. It also celebrated old-time values that never go out of style. Wit, humor, dignity, and respect for craft and history have their merits, to put it mildly. I found the humanistic and humane values embodied in this exhibition encouraging, even moving. Together, the words, objects, and values on view last fall suggest that something very positive and exciting is going on today in American metal. I find that quite wonderful.

Kenneth Ames is a writer who lives in New York, New York.

GLENDA ARENTZEN

AARON FABER GALLERY
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
MAY, 1998

text by **MARJORIE SIMON**

New York may be considered the capital of the fine art (read: painting) world, but craftspeople know there are too few galleries in which to view the impressive range of object-making today. Aaron Faber remains the sole long-standing jewelry gallery, and, even there, the group shows may be uneven in quality and selection. However, their commitment to solo exhibitions means an opportunity for the artist to work in depth and for an audience to experience the result of that exploration. Last year's presentation of Rebekah Laskin was a good example. So is this year's return invitation to Glenda Arentzen.

Arentzen's uptown exhibition provided an interesting contrast to the young German jewelers shown downtown at the same time. It was a reminder of the differing sensibilities that characterize nation and generation. A former Fullbright scholar and multiple prize winner in diamond and metal design, Arentzen has maintained a fresh American energy in her characteristic overlapping planes of lushly textured metal and colored gemstones. A love of process is evident in surfaces richly embossed with marks from hammer blows and gold pattern overlays. Planes intersect, overlap, and butt up against each other in a fractious display of light. Some look as if an object designed by Eleanor Moty might suddenly take flight. Standing amidst the cavorting forms is like being in the middle of a film with overlapping, joyous dialogue.

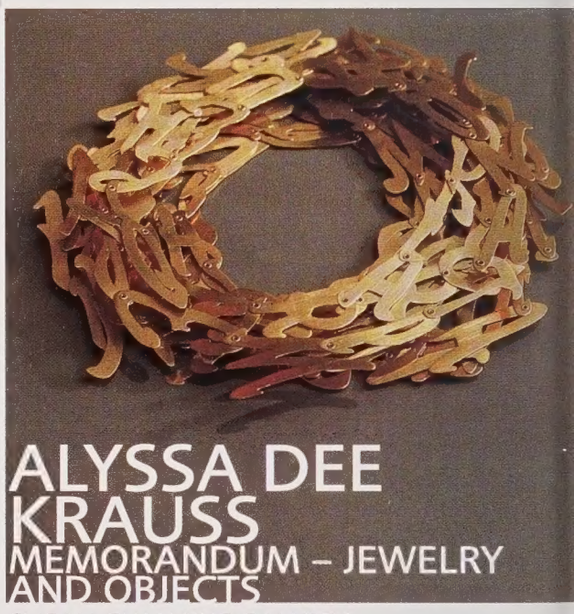
These necklaces and earrings are clearly related to Arentzen's hinged bracelets of past decades, but there's constancy in the energy, attention to body scale, and assertive treatment of the metal.

Viewers and collectors who have come to confirm that all is right with the world, that there are still working artists who make objects of beauty and grace that are wearable and affordable, could hardly do better than take in this collection of sixty pieces of jewelry and drawings. More than merely delivering a known quantity of beautiful work, Glenda Arentzen stands for the renewable spirit of American craftsmanship, and her contribution to the same ought to be continually acknowledged.

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith, a member of *Metalsmith*'s Editorial Advisory Committee, and a frequent contributor to this magazine.

left
Glenda Arentzen
Untitled
sterling, 14k, 24k

below
Alyssa Dee Krauss
Once Upon a Time (necklace), 1998
14k, 18k



ALYSSA DEE KRAUSS
MEMORANDUM – JEWELRY AND OBJECTS

SUSAN CUMMINS GALLERY
MILL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA
MARCH 2 – APRIL 4, 1998

text by **CHARLENE MODENA**

A thousand years after the appearance of the Carolingian *Phenomenon*, a manuscript filled with mythological and zodiacal figures in an image on text form, French poet Guillaume Apollinaire gave this "figured verse" a new name: calligrams. Many scripts, including Hebrew, Arabic, and Chinese ideograms, are in a sense calligrams. These texts express through their shapes the outline of animate and inanimate objects and are often considered, within many cultures, to be of divine origin with miraculous, transformational powers. A classic example is the delightful Japanese ghost story *Hoichi the Earless One*, in which a boy is covered, except for his ears, with a calligraphic "prayer," protecting him

from marauding spirits.

Calligrams and calligraphy endure as a mysterious, diaphanous curtain between art and expression, between drawing and the making of symbols and signs. Consequently, contemporary artists in all fields continue to pay homage to written text. Within the current revival of those using calligrams, or text with image, is Alyssa Dee Krauss, bringing to this genre an exquisite and particularly poignant vantage point.

As I viewed Krauss's necklaces, rings, and brooches at the Susan Cummins Gallery, I could watch the text/narrative become the form and then, like an electrical current switching polarity, the form became the text/narrative. In this synchronicity of creative references which Krauss has created, the boundaries between form and text blur. Constructed entirely of words, Krauss's jewelry offers not only ornamentation, but also an opportunity for the wearer to become a participant in the narrative.

The text often takes the form of popular quotes, familiar bromides, fairy tales, and myths. Frequently, the mood is one of cultural sexism or unrealistic and consequently unfulfilled dreams. The gold necklace, *Once Upon a Time*, ambling across the display, reads "Once upon a time in a land far away there lived a beautiful princess and the handsome Prince Charming rode up on his white horse, carried her off and they lived happily ever after." The wandering qualities of both text and necklace combine to reveal a melancholy declaration: the perils of a relationship with the ivory-towered Prince Charming. Dreams decayed and abandoned are embodied in the contrasts of a second *Once Upon a Time* necklace. Constructed of flaking rusted iron with gold, the text reads, "Once upon a time the beautiful princess and the handsome Prince Charming lived happily ever after."

Krauss also explores Braille and Morse code as text. Looking at this group of jewelry objects with its masterful dance between alphabet and form, I once again realize the impossibility of understanding all an artist intends in his/her work. At the same time I appreciate the evocative quality of ambiguity as an intrinsic part of the artistic process. It is this ambiguity that allows me, as an artist and viewer, to access my personal recollections of repetitive and frustratingly unsuccessful attempts to communicate in relationships. As the text of the sterling silver and rock crystal Braille bracelet succinctly states, "None so blind as those who will not see."

The Bandage Badge series, poignant aglets of gold or steel, each with a glistening drop of garnet, is a painful reminder of the consequences of a "Once Upon a Time" belief system. *The Bandage Badge* brooches, each carefully wrapped in a chrysalis of surgical gauze, may seem, to the casual observer, out of sync with the other works. But ultimately these badges are a symbol of renewal, are deeply interwoven with the contextual experience of the entire body of work, and are clearly the precursors of significant additional work.

Charlene Modena is a mixed media sculptor and metalsmith residing in Muir Beach, California. She teaches Metal Arts/Jewelry at the Academy of Art in San Francisco.

CYNTHIA COUSENS

WORKSHOPS AND LECTURES SPRING 1998

text by **GORDON LAWRIE**

In the South of England, the great Weald plain of Sussex stretches blue into the distance. The green hilly downland rises above the clayland farms, their open roundness emphasizing the checkerboard of small odd shaped fields framed by trimmed thorn and thicket. History hangs like a medieval mist over these ancient lands. The rolling hills, which are covered with short cropped turf, fragrant with herbs, break open where they meet the English Channel, to expose high white cliffs of chalk. Tennyson immortalized it as " Green Sussex fading into blue, with one gray glimpse of sea." It is a luminous land of high horizons and silhouettes against the skyline. In winter the mass of the Downs is pointed up by the linear quality of the tree branches, thorns and fence lines. It is at the foot of these huge images of creative calm that Cynthia Cousens, one of England's pre-eminent artist jewelers, lives and draws her inspiration.

A whirlwind series of workshops and lectures by Cousens at universities in the Southwest presented her with a stark contrast in landscape and exposed her to many different facets of American art- jewelry and education. It provided a good opportunity for dialogue between jewelers in America and one of Europe's leading exponents. The workshops explored the sentience of the drawn line and its metamorphosis into metal, while the lectures explained the influences of the landscape on her work.

Cousens talked about her necklace series, which is a radical departure from the earlier brooches and a subsequent ring series; it is "the culmination of a period of determined re-appraisal and development."[1] In her ring series, she addresses the function of the ring as a container for the finger or the finger contained. The rings break away from the restriction of function while remaining entirely wearable. They have a presence that belies their size.

In the necklace series, her work is less inhibited by the preciousness of the materials which she uses to explore the linear forms that seem such a distillate of the visual images of the Downland fringe. She uses her technical virtuosity and observation of detail as a spring board to give voice to a summation of her experience of the environment. Working from sketches, models, and studies, she researches the density and solidity of the lines in the structure. The skeletal outline of winter branches and finely observed twig forms have given spareness to her constructed necklaces. These important pieces have extended her aesthetic vocabulary.

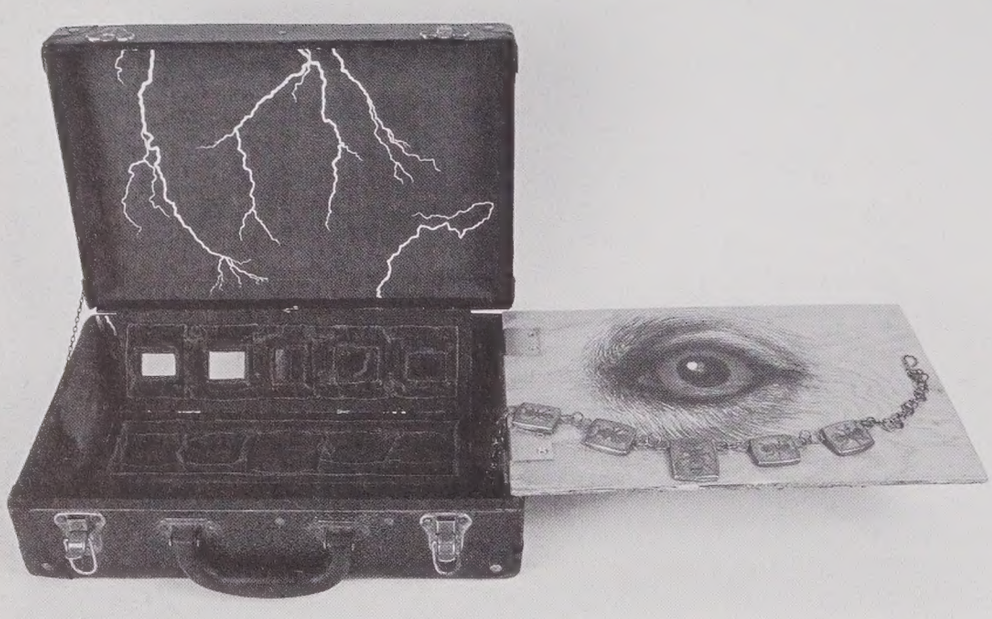
The Sussex Downs are a landscape of renewal, and Cousens joins a long list of artists affected to a deep degree by their intangible spirit. William Blake, D.H. Lawrence, W.B.Yeats and Edward Elgar all found spiritual metamorphosis that marked their work; as Virginia Woolf expressed it, "with something abstract, but residing in the downs or sky. . . reality I call it."[2]

Gordon Lawrie is a metalsmith who resides in El Paso, Texas.

[1] Theophilus, L., *Cynthia Cousens Necklaces.* London: South East Arts, 1997

[2] Mosley, J., *Images of the Downs*. London: Macmillan Ltd.,1983

above
Cynthia Cousens
Cocoon Waisted (encircling-net barbed rings), 1993
silver, gold
Photograph by Joel Degen



ERIKA WANEMACHER: SPELLS

LINDA DURHAM GALLERY
GALISTEO, NEW MEXICO
AUGUST 30 - SEPTEMBER 21, 1997

text by **ELLEN BERKOVITCH**

REVIEWS

above
Erika Wanemacher
Bearing the Burden (of the Fallible Human), 1997
suitcase, anthill, wood, cloisonné enamel
15 x 30 x 12"

opposite page top
Bettina Dittlmann
Heart (brooch), 1998
binding wire, garnets

opposite page bottom
Janis Kerman
Necklace, 1997
aquamarine, peridot, pearl, iolite

Viewers approach a small open suitcase. Painted forks of lightning point to the pebbled mound of a defunct anthill affixed to a panel inside the case. Upon opening the panel they are startled by the painting of one brown eye, unblinking and looking straight back at them. Tucked into a green velvet lining is an enameled necklace singling out five perfect little ants for attention. Stamped on the back, the words: "Bearing the Burden of the Fallible Human."

Artist Erika Wanenmacher has not only replaced the ants into their palace, she has tweaked the viewer's perception of jewelry. It is no longer a gilded prize polished clean of the messy nature from which its materials originate. Ants, in a Navajo creation story, came to earth from twelve layers below the ground, warring and killing with every step upward. Yet when they got here, they were ants: paradoxically the lowliest of critters and very complex, possessing a hierarchical social organization, a fortress architecture, and a powerfully deterrent poison.

The brown eye is the eye of one of Wanenmacher's pet dogs. One day last summer, while preparing for this exhibition, her truck broke down. While frustratedly fixing it in the driveway, she ignored the dog's barking, only later discovering that her favorite had caught its collar in the fence, strangled, and died. *Bearing the Burden*, then, is a paean to human vulnerability, specifically the vulnerability that is the price of lapsed attention.

Re-invigorating attention through material is at the heart of Wanenmacher's work. *Spells*, constituting a dozen or so objects, continues and expands the artist's habitual investigations of environmental despoilment as well as personal story, of traditions of shamanism and facts of natural science. Wanenmacher has said that she uses the word *spells* as a synonym for prayer. The philosopher Simone Weil defined prayer as an enhanced form of intelligent concentration.

Such concentration is apparent in Wanemacher's bridging of technical artistry and references to human biology and experience. Dendrites are branch-like neuron fibers in the brain that conduct impulses toward the cell body. In *Giant Neuron*, the dendrites of forged steel appear to make reaching gestures. Their material precision combines strength and delicacy, rendering the transcendentally perfect sensory capacities human beings possess.

Wanenmacher is gifted with a marvelous technical hand and a facility for learning new things. By observing a master blacksmith at Tom Joyce's Santa Fe studio she taught herself forging. Her use of metal is more than incidental. Guiding her art practice are principles of alchemy, the ancient science of the transmutation of base metals into gold that was an allegory for the transformation of the human soul, and the perfecting of worldly conditions. Finally, Wanenmacher is a utopian futurist for whom art can enclose both simple narrative and acts of remediation.

In 1995, Wanenmacher began traveling twice a year to the Trinity Site in south-central New Mexico. The spot that Robert Oppenheimer selected for the test of the first atomic bomb had been the homestead of one McDonald family, dislocated by the U.S. government after having ranched the land for generations. Wanenmacher selected broken glass from around the perimeter of the old ranch house, and, using a piece of found Trinitite for a pendant, soldered the shards into a necklace that she enclosed into a picture frame faced with wire safety glass.

Her appropriation of the by-product of an earth-shattering act and its incorporation into jewelry marks a radical gesture, integrating remembrance from a site where past and future collided for eternity. *McDonald's Necklace* reconstitutes an emblem of human life from a place where life itself was threatened.

While preparing *Spells*, Wanenmacher learned on the evening news of a mysterious dying off of woodpeckers in Albuquerque's Sandia Mountains. Setting out to investigate the reason for the birds' deaths, she kept finding ambiguous responses. She finally gave up seeking a clear solution, but proposed in an exquisitely fabricated scene a powerful totem of transformation. A bird body of rayon and silk feels to the touch like feathers. The bird head, or mask, stares dead-on at the viewer.

The critical theorist Elaine Scarry has written, in *The Body in Pain*, that all human creation originates from a wish to alter adverse conditions. Scarry also recalls that the missing link between ape and human, sought by generations of scientists, was not found in the skull, as had been surmised, but in the hand, defining us, in evolutionary terms, principally as creators. When told of this Wanenmacher struck a blow on the table in joyful assent. Her gifted hand transmits Weil's definition of prayer: an embodiment of heightened concentration. It offers a proposal, through material, of greater attention, and of a far more conscious and conscientious world.

Ellen Berkovitch is a writer and frequent contributor to *Metalsmith*. She lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

BETTINA DITTLMANN: MOON AND SKY

JEWELERS'WERK GALERIE
WASHINGTON, DC.
APRIL 23 - MAY 14, 1998

text by MARJORIE SIMON

Bettina Dittlmann's collection of small objects, jewelry, and drawings demonstrates a sustaining confluence of process and concept. Spidery line drawings and earrings shaped like organic bolls of enameled copper foil are balanced by substantial forged rings of silver and gold.

There are a number of complementary ideas, each of which appears thoughtful, even contemplative. One has to do with form, and is realized in earrings constructed from leaves of copper foil and covered with opaque enamel. The enamel holds the form together without solder and the foil allows them to be light enough to wear. Colors are cobalt blue, lime green, persimmon, matte black.

Another idea has to do with the possibilities of line, spun from binding wire, sometimes soldered, sometimes enameled. Like Shari Mendelson's wire crowns, Dittlmann's tiny circlet of prong-like forms uses shadow so that a line becomes double, and a crown becomes barbed wire. The effect is enhanced by stark lighting in the tiny gallery. In a commentary on materials, a crown or doily of binding wire and pyrite, glittering like diamonds, rests on a photocopied image of a Victorian rosary, covered with an India ink wash. A large heart of dark scrambled wire like Bavarian filigree from Dittlmann's native country carries sentiments of home after living in the US, and it is packed with thoughts of loss, love, and mourning. It has the slightly queasy feeling of the original Victorian hair jewelry, cobbled together or knitted up into a giant hairball.

Contrasting these sensibilities is a collection of thirty or so rings of silver and gold, each forged from a button of metal. The silver rings are a dirty white, with a patina that will develop over time. They carry visual and physical heft, as weighty as the line sketches are impossibly light. The forging balances the labor intensive contemplative pieces; they are about centering, as opposed to building up and out from an aggregate of forms. In addition, they use the body in a different way, both in their construction (the maker) and their reference (the wearer).

The installation reflects Dittlmann's desire to communicate her intentions to her audience. Only an enamelist would know of the skill required to complete the more than fifty firings necessary to achieve the impossibly transparent red earrings (red enamel burns out easily), or to fabricate the gold ear wires that snap into a gold housing on them (an enameled object cannot be soldered). But the combination of drawings and objects, the groupings of colored earrings, and the all black sketches, encourage the viewer to consider the historical significance of jewelry for the European bourgeoisie and the intrinsic appeal of intimate objects.

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith, a member of *Metalsmith*'s Editorial Advisory Committee, and a frequent contributor to this magazine.

JANIS KERMAN

PRIME GALLERY
TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA
OCTOBER 29 - NOVEMBER 22, 1997

text by BARBARA ISHERWOOD

This exhibition of recent one-of-a-kind pieces by Janis Kerman displays the deft sense of balance, colour, and rhythm for which this Montreal jeweller is known. In pendants, earrings, and rings of coloured stones, pearls, 18k gold, and sterling, Kerman exploits the beauty of precious materials while adding a contemporary edge through irregular geometric configurations and unconventional juxtapositions of colours and forms.

Viewing this show after having attended a slide retrospective presented by the artist as part of a Metal Arts Guild seminar was of benefit in understanding her current work. Throughout her prolific fifteen-year career, Kerman has been driven by an insatiable need for variety that surfaces in both her unique pieces and production lines. Fortunately her diverse output is unified by a strong artistic personality characterized by a sophisticated understanding of colour and design.

Cabochon stones are a prime element in Kerman's constructivist vocabulary, and are shown to great advantage in her earrings. This show included a wonderful pair of her now familiar complimentary – rather than matching earrings – in which circles, squares and triangles of amethyst, carnelian, rose quartz, and 18k yellow gold descend in two cascading mosaics of saturated colour.

Other paired units in this new group show a trend towards subtler variations. Cufflinks in sterling silver and blue chalcedony are accentuated by an 18k bar placed at the top of one, and at the side of its partner. A pair of rectangular gold and rhodolite earrings is given a twist simply by turning one upside down. While less adventurous than her complimentary pairs, Kerman's matching sets retain a lively streak through her layering of materials and shapes. The top of an earring features a pearl, gold and jade in consecutive circles like an abstract open-faced sandwich, from which dangles a sleek sliver of jade. A green coin pearl and minute garnets decorate the face of a pair of gold disc earrings.

Detachable elements vary the look of some pieces — Kerman's experience in production jewellery seems to have instilled in her a sensitivity to the wearer's needs that is not always in evidence in these times of self-reflective work. A sumptuous six strand necklace of tiny peridot beads is hung with a removable 18k cross-shaped pendant mounted with round pearls, a large rectangular cabochon cut aqua, and an elongated pearl, whose asymmetric shape provides the unpredictable touch that balances Kerman's precision craftsmanship. When the pendant is removed, the necklace can be reversed, so that the elegant fastening, a gold hoop and bar embellished by an iolite and an aqua drop, becomes the focus.

Kerman's palette is rich but not garish. A large kidney-shaped 18k brooch, sprinkled with tiny diamonds and accentuated by a baroque pearl, is given a frosted finish, sparing the eye from being overwhelmed by an expanse of shiny metal. The effect is that of opulence tempered by slight eccentricity and a sense of humour.

Barbara Isherwood is a frequent contributor to Metalsmith. She currently resides in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

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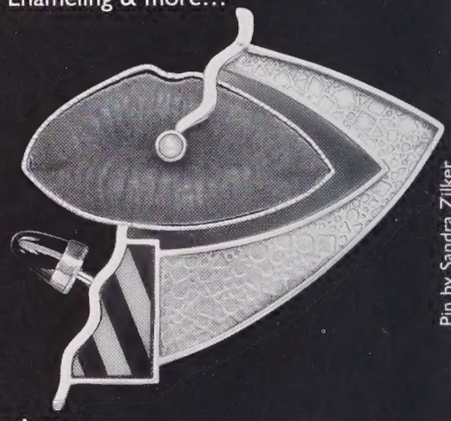

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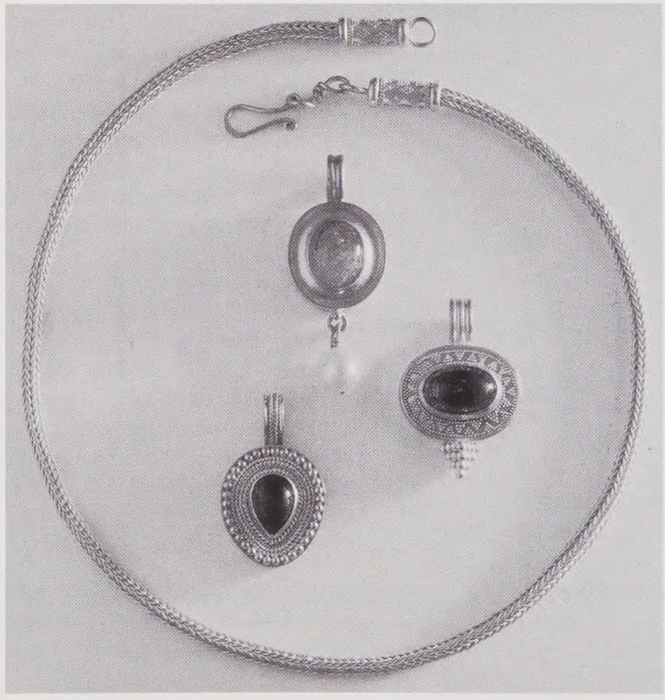

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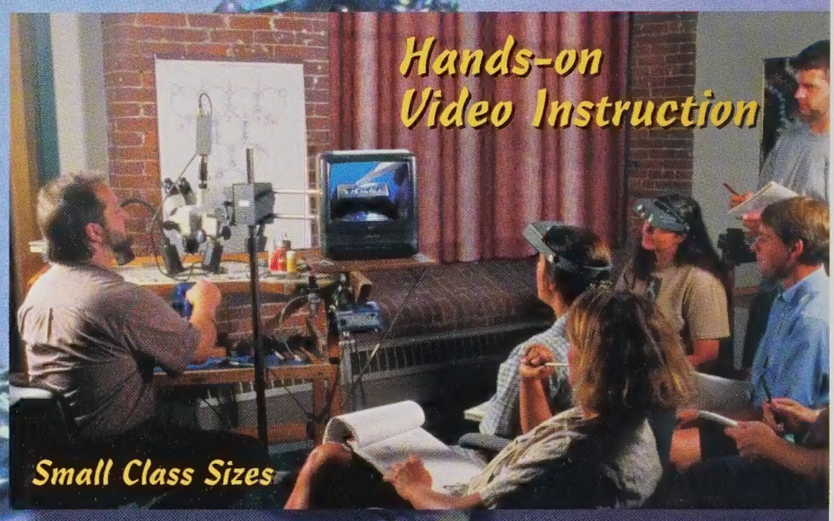

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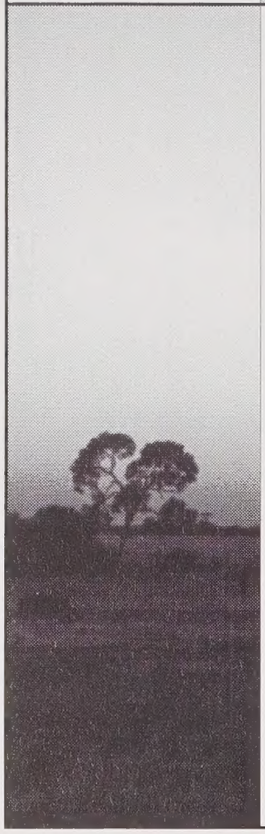

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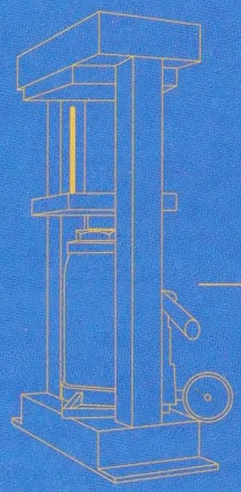

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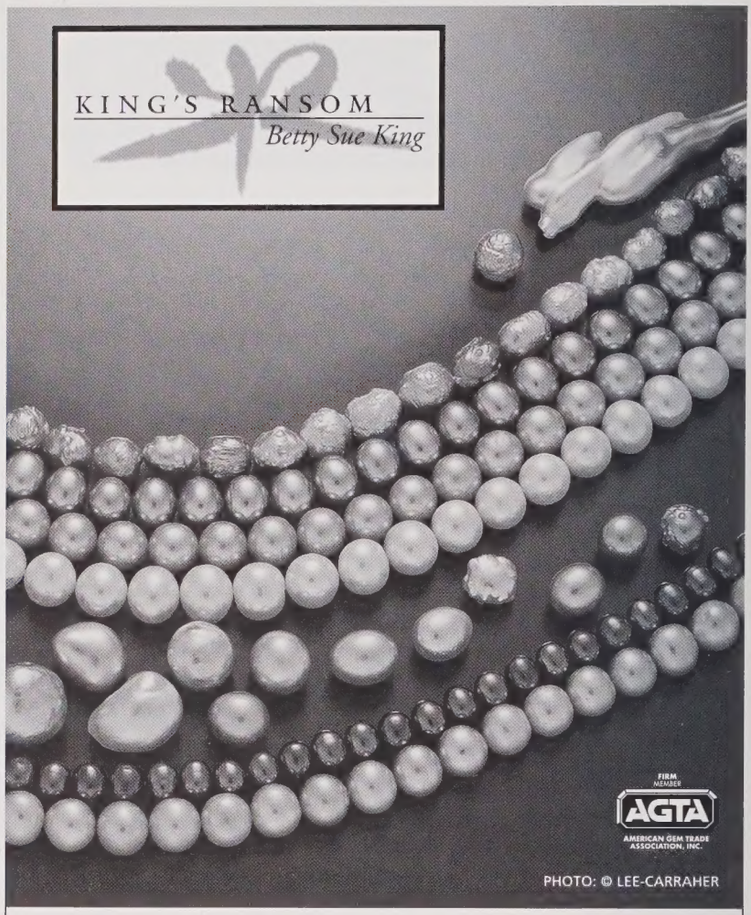

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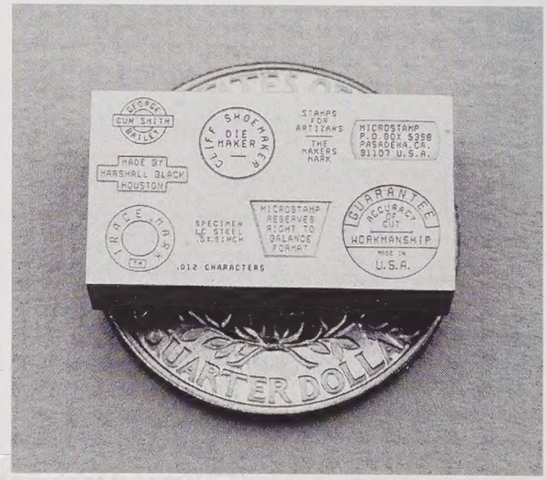
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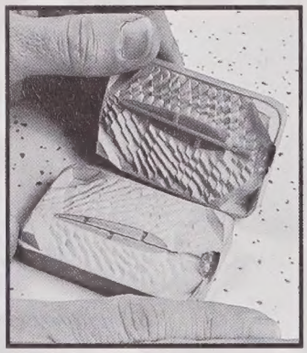

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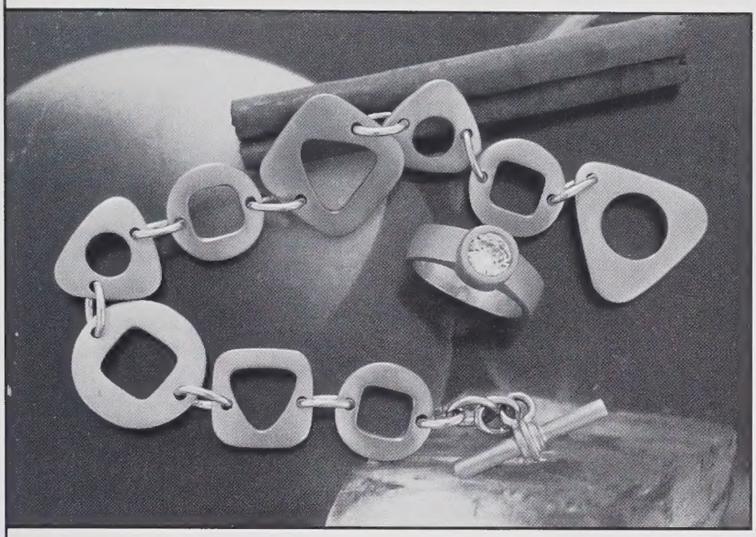

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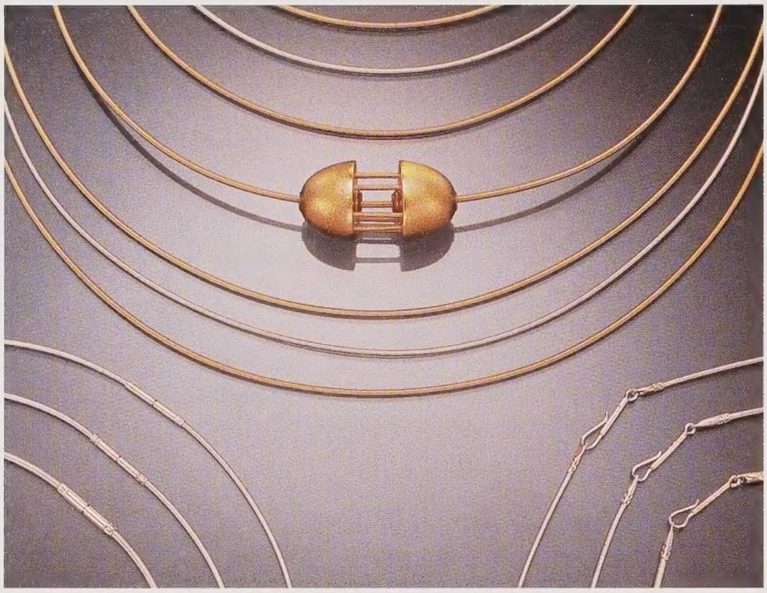

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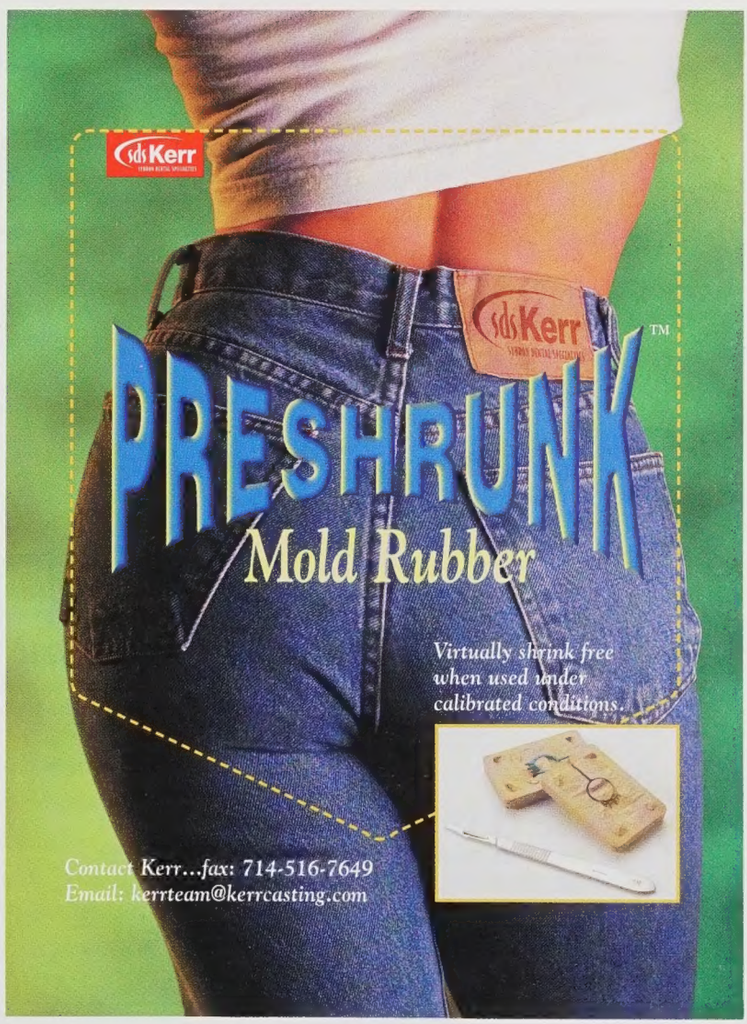

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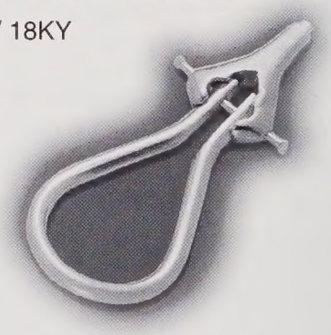

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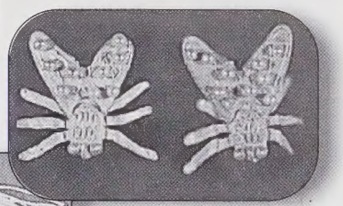

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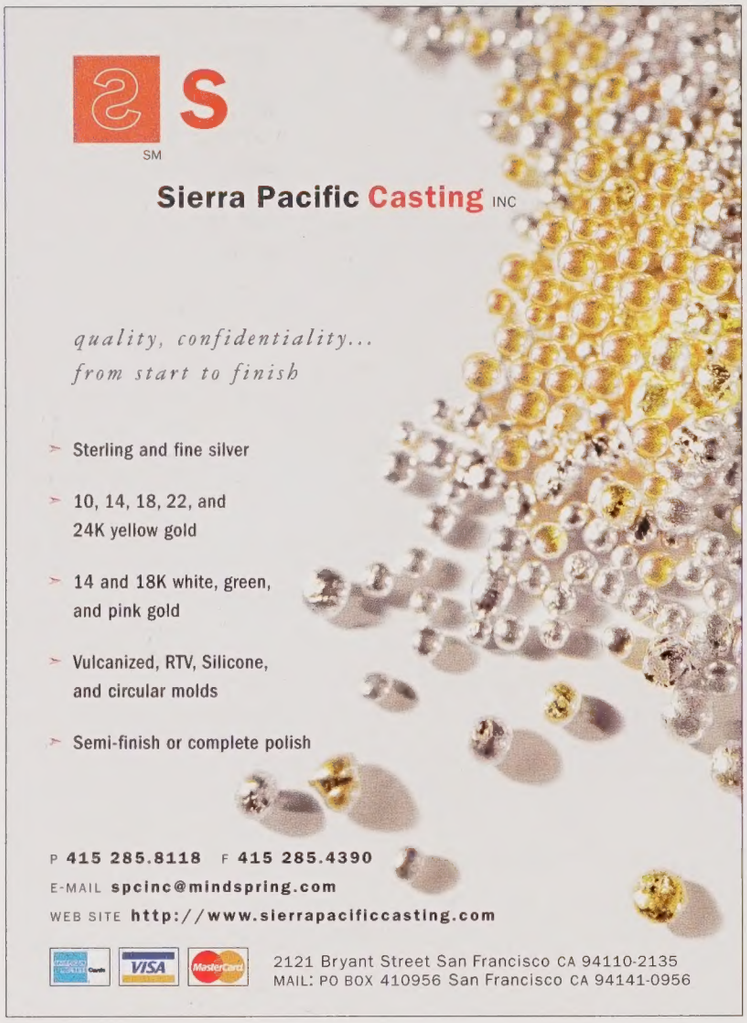

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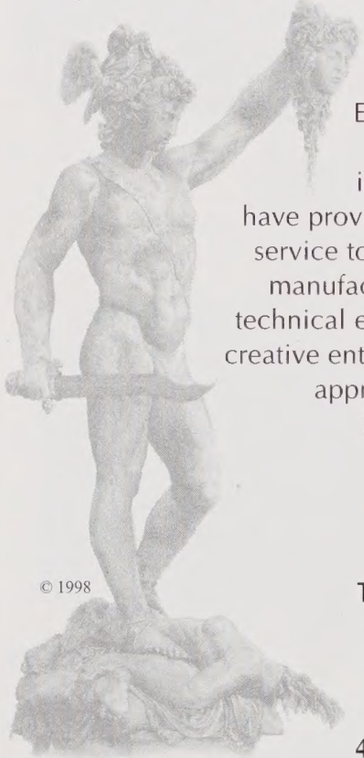

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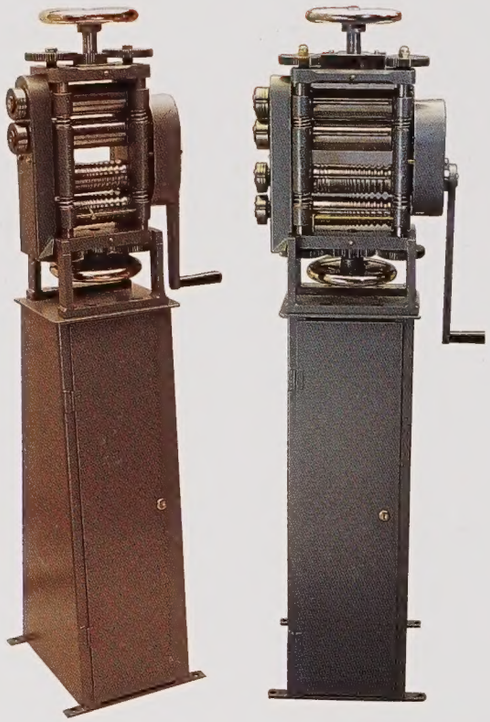

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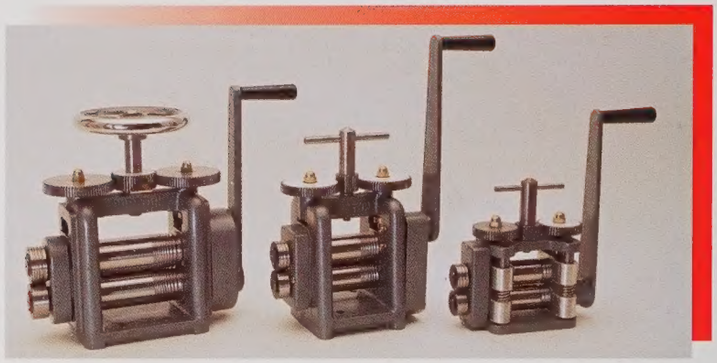

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